

# The Story



of a  
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By  
Ethel Maudie Tolson



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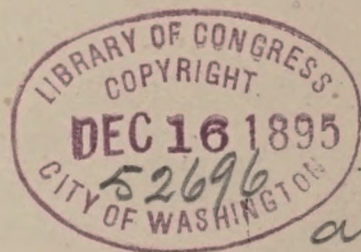




THE  
STORY OF A DREAM

BY

ETHEL MAUDE COLSON *Brazelton*



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Just over the border which lies between  
The life which we feel and know  
And that which no earth-blind eyes have seen,  
Is a place where all souls must go;  
Where strange things happen and visions come,  
And life like a fancy seems,  
As far and faint as a wild bee's hum,—  
'Tis the wonderful Land of Dreams.

There joys too pure for this baser earth  
Lie waiting for eager hearts,  
And loves which died in their very birth  
Grow near as the world departs;  
There vanished faces look forth and smile,  
And many a lost hope gleams,  
And buried thoughts live a sweet, short while,—  
In the wonderful Land of Dreams.

There sorrows shirked must be borne anew,  
And many a heart must ache;  
But how sweet is the land where all dreams are true,  
The world which each soul must make!  
Glad Life and Death in its bounds are one,  
Each fed by its varying streams,  
And all return, when their days have gone,—  
To the wonderful Land of Dreams.







## **Dedicated**

**TO MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER, AND  
TO THE "OTHER MOTHER" WHO EQUALLY  
SHARES WITH THEM MY DEEPEST LOVE  
AND AFFECTION.**







# THE STORY OF A DREAM.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE DREAMER.

THIS is the story of a dream. Not only a dream of the kind which visit souls by night, the God-sent, world-derided visions which mankind receives with half-veiled belief while still the night is dark, and laughs to scorn in the new-found bravery and presumption of the dawning day, but one of the longer dreams which mortals call Life. It is the story of the last period I spent on earth, but not the last I shall pass there, I fear, for I am far, very far, from perfection, and the earth is the school in which the kindly Law of Nature decrees that all souls must seek after and find this wondrous thing, the Holy Grail of which the poet-seers sing.

Am I dead? Oh yes, long since! How am I writing this? Do not ask. Suffice it to say that I died very long ago. So long ago, indeed, that I have almost forgotten how it



feels to have a material body, and it is only once in a decade or so that I feel the mad desire to live, to breathe, to feel the warm blood pulsing in my veins and watch it coloring my limbs; to know, in a word, all the sweet, unappreciated, blissful pleasures which belong merely to living, the glorious joys men ceased to care for centuries ago. They went out of date and fashion together with the times of simple patriarchal existence, the times when men knew all a soul needs to know without the labor of studying, the times of happiness and health, the times which died when the desire for learning and accomplishments took possession of the mind of the race. Nature mourns for those days still, the winds wail, the rains weep, and the waters moan for its memory always; but the human children of the Great Mother, save only the very old who have outgrown the hurry of life, the young who have not yet become drunken with its mad pace, and here and there a child-soul which still longs and pines for the old, sweet, simple days when life was one long joy, have forgotten their lost heritage, and rest content, nay, never content,—but satisfied, with the idols of Money, Fame and Ambition, which



they have substituted for the keynote to which the harmony of the whole universe beat once,—the Song of Love. The eyes of the dumb beasts are still sad with the haunting memory of that joyous period, far back in the babyhood of mankind; the children and idiots who are not blind with the world's knowledge live in it by seasons, but alas for humanity! It is a dream which only comes to older people very rarely, in times of sorrow and extreme gladness; in the times when they turn to the Great Mother, and rest upon her wide, loving bosom, exactly as in times of childish gladness or trouble we all turn to the mother who bore us, and take comfort in her sympathy. But this happens seldom in an ordinary life; only,—at the end, when we are tired, and our hearts are worn out with aching or joy, and our souls and bodies alike bent with the burden of the years in which we have tried to live, but never succeeded, because men have learned so much that they have forgotten how to live,—at the end of all, we turn our faces to the wall and are gathered at last to the rest which the earth holds for all her children alike, be they good, bad, or worse than bad,—indifferent.



What has all this to do with me, and my story of a dream? Much, very much. It is a kind of wandering record of the aggregate impressions I have learned since I left the earth, and came, not a step higher, perhaps, but at least a step farther on. I am telling you how life looks to those who no longer experience it, and I have looked at it often since I rashly took the Eternal Law in my own hands, and threw my body away.

For I was a suicide. I killed my body; not with steel or powder or poison, it is true; that is, not poison of the material world, but I murdered my body, and went far toward murdering my soul, with the subtler, more deadly poison of the mentality, bad thoughts, not exposed to the air of the world and the nullifying effects of the thing called "Fear of men's Condemnation," but shut up, prisoned, in the soul till they turned and rended it. I slew my body by the power of mine own unbridled passions, grown strong with ages and æons of flourishing use and indulgence, and sent my shivering Ego out into a strange, cold world for which it was not yet ready.

I pass over the agonies I endured during the time which elapsed between the date of



my bodily death and the day on which this should have occurred had I lived rightly, the time in which my personality, bound to the earth by that material body which I had loved so well and blindly, and to which I was irrevocably anchored so long as an atom of it remained mouldering in the earth, for there were none to have it disintegrated quickly by the kindly fire; the cruel time when I was but a dreaded phantom to the finer souls who were able to discern my astral body as it floated around the places where I had lived, going over and over the scenes which had especially impressed its soulless personality,—and come to the time when I found myself here in Devachan.

Where is Devachan? Who can tell? It is not a place but a state, and how I came here is beyond your comprehension,—and mine. But here I am, and here I have been for—how long? I do not know; time in Devachan is like that idea of it which the “sweet singer of Israel,”—ah me! how far he had seen along the Shadowy Ages himself!—attributes to his deity. You remember, do you not? “A day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years but as one day.”



So it is here, in this Place of Souls; we know that time is, but we experience it not.

We do not live, we never die, for we are but awaiting another birth, another entrance into the struggle of life, higher or lower in the scale according to our former misdeeds or successes. Shall I ascend in the scale next time? How can I tell? I failed in my endeavors because I tried wrongly, and would have constrained Nature, but I labored long and faithfully, and the Law is kind as well as just. On earth men are kind or cruel, but they are never just. Here all is unfailing, inexorable, unalterable justice.

On earth men think that the Law, or God, as they phrase it, has favorites; they say He blesses one and curses another; here we know better. We know that we live in the houses we have builded with our own personalities; we know that we have laid out our own environments, and that as we have sown so must we reap, until the crop is all harvested; and on earth men continually plant afresh,—good and evil mixed together,—and yet they mourn that the crop is not all fine, pure grain.

How do we pass the time in Devachan? We need not to pass it. We have no pleas-



ures, no sorrows. All sensation is alike to us, as to all souls which are naked and bare of the covering of thoughts with which they clothe and hide themselves from themselves and each other, and we need no amusements. We rest. Rest in an utter completeness of repose which mortals cannot comprehend while still they live on the earthly plane. We rest and rest simply.

Only,—we dream. Pleasant dreams always; that is, pleasant in the way that it is pleasant to read of varied experiences, for we dream of the lives of our dearest and nearest,—yes, I put the dearest first, for is it not true that oftentimes the ones we love best are bound to us by no tie of kinship or blood?—we see them pass before us in the astral light, but everything we see is tinged as with rose-color, for the Law is kind and tender, as are all just things, and we know naught of pain or sorrow here, in our Land of Dreams. We know that sorrow and joy are alike both needful and good, and in finding the thing for which men have ever fought and battled, the thing for which all long, albeit under many different names, the thing which is not found on earth, and the lack of which has given the



sad bitterness to the cry which rings up to us from the earth, in embracing Justice, undisguised as Forgiveness or Mercy, we have found peace.

Sometimes we dream of our own past lives, the lives which have lifted or lowered us in the waters of time and space, and sometimes our dreams are of that which is yet to be.

All the dreams which give happiness to men, every lovely vision after which they strive and seek, every glorious phantom for which they vainly reach, comes to us first.

Never a beautiful picture is painted, or a statue hewn, never a grand poem speaks to the soul of the world, never a lovely creation is brought into being but we see its astral counterpart, its foreshadowing, and we see them in a degree of beauty men never do, for we see the Ideal, and they the Real.

We see all the good and noble actions which help the world, too, even to the patient thoughts and aspirations of the Unknown Heroes who crowd the world unseen of men; we see how they sweeten the earthly atmosphere, we see their prayers and renunciations rising up like a golden mist, and sometimes we see how mistaken, how foolish are their sacrifices.



But we never wish to prevent them, to play Providence, for we know that all is well, and that even evil is but perverted good. And we know that a well-balanced reward awaits the good, and equally well-balanced punishment the evil among men. For this is the world in which cause and effect are practically one, and intentions are of more import than deeds.

In this state, too, we view our own actions as impartially as those of another, and we neither mourn for nor regret them.

But sometimes we dream dreams about ourselves, sad, strange, sweet dreams, and I often dream over all that has happened to me. . . And this is what I always dream of first.



## CHAPTER II.

### A DREAM OF THE HEART OF THE STORY.

LONG, long ago, away back in the dim, far-away ages of the world, when mankind was yet in its primeval simplicity, and courts of law were unknown, there lived in the land of Assyria a youth and a maiden. And the youth loved the maiden as the apple of his eye, and all day as he tended his flocks and all night as he lay sleepless and gazed at the heavens, he thought but of her. The sunshine seemed bright or dim to him just as she smiled or frowned, the stars looked down upon him many times as he wept for the very love of her, and the moon witnessed his joy if she but looked kindly at him. The softly falling rain, the sparkling dew, the birds and the bees, the field-flowers and the waving grain all sang a joyously-sad song of which her name formed the refrain, with the wind and



the thunder to fill out the harmony, and her face looked up from the brooklets, down from the clouds, and appeared to him in the heart of each summer rose which swayed in the wind. The very ground she trod on was sacred to him, while the poor lame lamb she once pitied led the life of a king.

Now the maiden, though she loved not the youth after this manner, yet she was but a maiden, and it pleased her well to be so loved; so, knowing no other love, she yielded to his persuasions, and was given to him for wife, although she would not be espoused to him until the summer was past and gone. And as she went about her work each day, calm and peaceful, he lived but for her, and he pined for the summer to pass. Each day he thought of her beauty until his blood was like wine in his veins, and when her quietness chilled him, he thought also, "When the autumn comes, and she is mine own, she will wake and love me," and striving to teach her the lesson so easy to learn, yet which cannot be taught, he trusted in God and was happy.

Now the heart of the maiden was like a prisoned bird, and it fluttered in her bosom when she was alone, but at the youth's ap-



proach it grew colder and more heavy each day. Yet she thought not of the matter, and, living her simple life, was happy too.

But one day as she stood at the well ready to draw water, a man of the tribe of Israel rode by, and he looked at the maiden and loved her. And when the soft glance of her eyes had showed him that she too loved him, he lingered and talked with her, and went to sojourn at her father's house. And it came to pass that on many days they met by the well, and their hearts grew more together every day. And the youth who had thought her his own became flushed with anger, but still he trusted in God to right his cause, and spake no word to the maiden. Yet as the days went by he thirsted for the blood of the Israelite, and the Hebrew smiled whenever they met and said naught of marriage to the maiden, for his religion forbade him to marry one of another race.

And when the autumn was nearly gone, he made ready to depart, and lo! the maiden wept sore to go with him, but he said: "How could I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my father's house?" And as she still mourned and would not be comforted (after the manner of



maidens who love in vain), the youth to whom she had been promised heard her, and his heart waxed hot within him.

And when he had reviled the Israelite, he said: "Shalt thou go to thine own country and, taking her heart with thee, leave her body behind? Verily thou shalt marry her, else will I kill thee."

But the other answered: "I war not with striplings," and when the youth would have grappled with him he smote him and pierced him through the heart so that he died. And when he saw that the lad was dead, his spirit failed him, and he fled to his own country in haste; yet did he not take the maiden with him.

And she, mourning sore, regarded not the love of her kindred, nor the sorrow of her mother who bore her, but pined for the Israelite, and when the autumn rains began she drooped and died.

Now the soul of the Israelite was sore troubled when he knew that the damsel was dead and he mourned without ceasing, for he had loved her well, yet repented he not of the evil he had done her, but said: "How could I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my



father's house?" and his heart was still hardened. And it came to pass that when the spring came again, he too died, and was astounded; for the soul of the Israelite and that of the Ishmaelite are but alike and as naked as new-born babes, in the sight of God.

Then the great Law of the Created Universe, the unalterable, infallible, inexorable Law of Justice, which is God, spake to the soul of the Israelite and said: "When next thou shalt visit the earth, thou must suffer for this wrong which thou hast done. As thou didst love the Ishmaelish maiden, yet lacked the courage to marry her but didst flee and leave her to mourn, so in time to come shall she cause thee to love her, yet shall evade thy desire and thou shalt not be able to flee. As thou hast broken her heart, so shall thine own be rent in twain; as thou hast made one form of thy religion of more weight than Truth and Justice and hast raised it as a barrier between thyself and the maiden who loved thee, so, when next thou shalt meet, one self-made law of thy religious faith shall part thee yet again, shall bind thee with chains against which thou shalt struggle in vain, and shall make thy life a burden; and as thou didst place the selfish



pleasure of the moment above all else, so shalt thou strive in vain to conquer thy natural desires.

“And as for the youth thou slewest: thou didst steal his desire and the light of his life, and didst kill him in despair, with the work of his years yet undone. So shall he pierce thy heart with a sword sharper than thine own, so shall he throw down the tower which thy labor shall build, and so shalt thou, too, die in despair. Yet in the end thou shalt conquer, though seemingly defeated, and at last all unknowingly come to a true knowledge of Me.”

And to the soul of the maiden the great Law said: “Thou hast loved and hungered for love, and when next thou livest thou shalt have love in plenty; yet as thou hast despised the tenderness of thine own people, the love of kindred shall for a time be denied thee, and thou must also suffer in a less degree. But thy wrongs shall be avenged, yea, thou thyself shalt avenge them, for to thee as to all of my frailest yet strongest, my last and dearest creation, the wondrous Mystery called Woman, shall be given the powers of all the universe with but thine own ignorance



of them to serve as a shield for mankind, and thou shalt have thy heart's desire. Yet as thou hadst no faith in Me, the Law of Universal Good, and didst weakly yield to thy sorrow, thou, at thy next coming, must for awhile go faithless, and with a heavy heart."

And to the youth God said: "Thy life was lived unselfishly and for others, so in thy next incarnation all things shall smile on thee, save that for a little, thou too must wander in darkness without faith in God or man, because thou didst trust too blindly, and lacked the courage to take thine own, or hold that which thou didst claim. Yet thou shalt have the priceless boon of happy confidence in thyself, only beware lest it grow into presumption. But where thou wast defeated thou shalt conquer, where thy heart hungered it shall be filled, and where thou didst mourn, thou shalt rejoice. For 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'"

And to all the souls God said: "Rest now for a little space, until in the fullness of time ye shall meet again, and, forgetting your past lives, shall, in working out your own salvation, bring joy and sorrow to each other."

And all the souls heard the voice of God,



though none knew that the other heard, and they knew that his name was Justice.

And it came to pass that a great sleep fell upon them all.



### CHAPTER III.

#### A DREAM OF THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

AND when the dream of which I have spoken has passed from me, the dream in which I first knew and loved the woman for love of whom I killed my last body, and would fain have murdered my soul, I dream of her and myself under many skies, and in many strange circumstances. Sometimes I dream of the time when she was my wife, and would not love me; sometimes I dream of when she was the man and I the woman, of the life-dream in which I was *her* wife, and could not escape from her bondage; again I dream of when, ages later, I was a woman still, and loved her, still functioning as a man, to distraction, but the laws of the Molochs of Conventionality and Custom, bitter, heart-rending, accursed things, bound me as with chains of invisible iron, and kept me from



wooing her, from firing her cold heart with the flame which seared my own.

Now and then I dream of myself, once more a man in body, as well as soul, fighting through the wars of the crusaders with her colors on my helmet and sword-hilt; occasionally faint, dim visions of her, separated from me by the robe and cap of a convent, flit before me, and once in a long, long while I see her as my beloved, torn from my arms by racial prejudice. Always I dream of her as separated from me in heart, or soul, or body; always I am following a false scent; always it is my own misguided sense of right, my own blind bowing down to the things which are, my own lack of the courage which breaks down barriers and leaps obstacles, which holds us apart, and always he, the man whom I slew, stands between us. Sometimes he is her father, forbidding us to marry because of family feuds; sometimes he is the priest who persuades me that Religion is higher than Truth or Love; sometimes he is the general who orders my company away to the wars in which I am to lose my life,—and her once more; sometimes he is the lover she prefers to me. My saddest, bitterest dream



is of the life in which I was born with the strong, stern soul of a man in the weak, frail body of a woman, and saw him, her husband then, punish us both through his cruelty to her; the dream which comes nearest to moving me to anger, if a bodiless soul could be otherwise than calm, is the remembrance of my own helplessness under the sight of what she, my darling child in that incarnation, bore in the way of indignities, sufferings, and slavery. What wonder that in my next life I, a man, espoused the cause of the weaker sex, the sex which is as strong in heart as it is weak in body, and broke my own heart in a pitiful, vain, useless struggle against the laws and conditions which bound her to slavery! I died a maniac that time. What wonder, I say, what wonder!

My sweetest dream is of the life when she loved him rather than me, but in which I was able to save her life at the cost of my own, and, dying, to hold her in my arms. Perhaps it is because I carried that impression into Devachan with me that it remains so clear and strong; perhaps it is because I am still a long way from the perfect, calm, sexless love one perfected Ego should hold to-



ward another. I cannot tell. Dwellers in Devachan know the futility of the human "because," and "I know," and rest satisfied with an impression, not seeking to analyze it, to pull it apart as a rose is shorn of its leaves in a useless effort to find the home of its sweet perfume.

But in all my dreams I have loved her, I *do* love her, I love her still, I shall love her always, and though through each life I have not known the reason of my suffering in her lack of love or the want of her, still at the end of each period I have, for a brief space, understood the mystery, and here in Devachan I know. I know, too, that she shall yet be mine in heart as she is in reality, for we twain were designed for each other and are in reality but one, and though when I go hence from here, I shall again not know how this shall be, I shall surely struggle upwards, and, having expiated my sin of long ago, having conquered the cause I set in motion in that far-away land of Assyria, we shall come together, surely, certainly, yea, even though the whole universe were between us, and each separate atom held us apart; and our lives shall melt together, even as two sunbeams



melt into one, or two streams, coalescing, grow together indistinguishably.

And so I am happy and hopeful always, even when I think of how badly I remembered the lessons learned so hardly in this last dream of mine,—and this is the substance of the dream.

I was a priest; not of the Roman Catholic order, which is protected from loving by at least the traditions of centuries, the established order of things, and the confidence of the world in their celibacy; I was ever too prone to be foolhardy to thus protect myself from suffering, and ever too fearful of restraint; I was a priest of the Anglican Communion, with only mine own vow, made when I but dimly comprehended the power and beauty of love, to stand between me and my destruction.

But I was happy in mine own self-confidence, and dreamed not of falling. “For surely,” I thought in the depths of mine own conceit, “surely my will is stronger than love.” But who can transcend the mighty Law of Karma, who can conquer Fate?

Until my thirtieth birthday had been passed I was happy in my work and the power I had obtained over my congregation,—and to do



me justice, I wanted the power for good ends only, and really tried to induce obedience for the good of those who I fancied needed my care,—but suddenly a spasm of self-sacrifice enslaved me, and I left my church for a poorer one.

And then she came into my life, she whom in other bodies I had loved so long,—came and worked my undoing.

I was proceeding with vespers one evening, for I had instituted daily service, when I heard a voice thrilling out in the penitential psalm which I loved, for, with the idea of expiation which all unknowingly underran the glad current of my nature, I loved sad things, and reveled in penances and hard burdens. I spoke of love to my people, I told them of a Loving Father, but at heart I knew the God of my belief was a hard master, and I served him with tears and tribulations.

So it was that I loved the *De Profundis*, and I was already moved when I heard that voice. “Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord,” it sang in a sobbing, vibrating beauty which made me shiver, and cease to sing,—I sang much in that last life on earth, having a good voice and loving it as the true,



nature-trained musician always loves his instrument, be it voice or harp,—and until the psalm was ended I could think of nothing but that wondrous voice, moaning out the trouble of the heart which lay behind it.

Did I tell you that here in Devachan we know that voices are soul-bodies, and that though a man may hide his heart, may train his face to tell continual falsehoods, he cannot control his voice; it will always remain a faithful indicator of his spiritual condition?

And all the while I listened to that sweet, strong, deep tone, I knew that I had heard it many times before, heard it softly singing sweet love-songs, lilting happy melodies, murmuring tender cadences, and my whole heart responded to its call, the call which, unknown to either of us, it was sending from her heart to mine.

This is what I now know I knew; in the time when this came to pass, I would have thought such fancies worse than wicked,—foolish,—and I put the thought of that wondrous melody from me quickly. But when I rose from my knees and turned to face the congregation, I looked for the face belonging to it, and I recognized it immediately, although she was not singing then.



She faced me, in a seat near the front, and her sweet eyes gazed swimmingly up to mine. She was crying, and when the people had gone I found her there praying, and learned her grief. She thought, and so I fancied, that she confided her sorrow to me because I wore a priestly cassock, but I knew later, when I came here, that the confidence between us was the result of that bygone intimacy, a deduction as simple as that two and two make four. So are many hearts drawn together in a way the world wots not of. We understood not what it was which drew us together.

And this was the story she told me, her breath coming in quick sobs, her little hands clasped; this was the ordinary tale of common woe, which she poured out. She had lost her mother, her sole relative on earth, save an aunt whom she did not love, who cared not for her, and yet with whom she had come to live, and I, who had never known my mother or father, who had no kin to feel the family tie with me, felt my eyes grow dim and my throat dry with sympathy for her. And when I had comforted her, promised to call upon her at the home of her aunt, who was a member of my church, when she had gone on her



way, I sat and dreamed of her, even as I sometimes dream of her now. Poor soul, I little knew why life was so sweet that night; it was the beginning of the end.

After that I saw her every day, and she became an earnest believer in the advanced doctrines I believed and taught. She told me her sorrows, both in the confessional and at other times, and in this near communion, this drawing together of soul and body, we learned to love each other, she with the affection a child feels for its father, I as men have loved women ever since the first pair were created. But, as yet, I did not know it; I believed that I loved her merely as a pupil and penitent.

And she,—she was so dear, so lovely. Her personality twined itself around my heart, cramped my already restricted soul, and made me once more a slave to her winsomeness, as it had done so many times before.

She was such a little thing, not more than five feet high, but she was perfectly made, with tiny, lovable hands and feet, and the most slender, round form in the world. Why are small women so powerful to work havoc in the hearts of men? No grandly formed, statuesque beauty can compare with a minute



morsel of femininity for charm and the quality which attracts.

Dorothy, for her name was Dorothy Perseus, sweet name which just expressed her delightful nature,—you see I can rave foolish nothings about her now; it matters not, I have not my nature to struggle with and repress in this dream of rest,—had a small, pale face, with just the tints of a wild rose in her cheeks, and her eyes were gray, blue, black, green, just as her mood was sunny or mournful. But for the most part they were a clear greenish gray, the innocent, wide expression of which fascinated a man until he would have sold his soul for a sweet look of them, and her lashes were so long and curling that they threw shadows over her face and shining orbs like those which a passing cloud throws over bright, shining lakes and fields. Her face was broad at her white brows, and narrow at her cleft chin, and the hollow of her throat was the sweetest thing I ever saw, white as milk and soft as down. Her face was so sad and wistful at times that men were also sad to see it, and women loved her for its gentle gayety at others; a creature of moods she was, and sweetest in them all.



She was just plump enough to be full of lurking dimples, and the touch of her hands was like warm, white satin, flushed faintly with the pink of a seashell. A woman made for love was she, my darling, my dear, my sweetheart, albeit I never could call her thus, and I grew mad for love of her sweetness.

Yet I knew not that I loved her thus, until—the trial came, and my soul sank under the burden.

She had come to me in the confessional,—and often since I have thought that I must have been near the truth many times when she knelt there, with only the latticed screen between us, and her soft voice and the indescribable perfume of her hair intoxicating me as she told her small sins and laid bare to me the very workings of her soul, so that an intimacy of knowledge of her nature came to me which could have been obtained in no other way—this is the secret of churchly power—and when she had been gone some time, and I had roused myself from thinking of her, I went into the church, and she knelt there sobbing. What her grief was I never knew—I do not know even now—for looking at her thus weeping, I came suddenly to the



knowledge of the truth, and knew that I loved her as men only love once. Not this the love which the priest feels for his penitent, not this the fatherly love of the pastor, but the love of man for woman, of one soul for its twin.

For a moment my breath was gone and my heart stopped beating, but I retreated to the sacristy again, and in a moment I was outwardly calm. The spirit of the ancestors who had fought in all the wars of their times was strong within me, the blood which had made me eager for conflict in bygone ages welled up in my heart, and not for a moment would I dream of yielding to this—as I termed it—deadly sin.

I sat down and thought it over, dumb with surprise and angry dismay that I, Father Bertram, a sworn celibate, for seven years a member of the order of Saint Benedict, could love just as other men not bound by priestly vows; then I fell on my knees, but I could not pray. My soul was stricken dumb. If I had known that to my Higher Self alone could I look for help, I might have suffered less, but I did not know, and my will, so long super-dominant, having failed me, I was as



a drowning man, and knew not where to turn.

I did not go out into the church again; Dorothy, bless her dear name! had not seen me and I could not face her thus unmanned. So after a little I went to visit a dying parishioner, still with that curious sense of double consciousness which mankind feels when the ground beneath the trembling feet is suddenly stricken away; and when I returned it was night, and the church was locked and dark and silent.

I let myself in and was about to yield to my agony, to groan in very abandonment of suffering, as I faced the knowledge that I loved and could not marry, that I had sold my earthly happiness for the sake of a slender chance for a higher spirituality, when I heard a faint sigh, and when I had lit the gas I saw her, my dear, my beloved, there, asleep.

She was half kneeling, half sitting upon a hassock, with her little fair hands loosely clasped in her lap, and her head, covered with its veil of crisp, brown, waving hair, resting against the green cushions of the seat behind her. The dark background brought out the pallor of her face, still sad, and with traces of tears on her long black lashes, and



her breath came unevenly. I knew that she had gone to sleep there in the afternoon, worn out by her weeping, and that I must waken her, but I shrank from the task.

For some time I stood looking down at her, lying there in the sweet, unconscious abandonment of sleep; then I stooped and touched her hand. That touch was like applying fire to a prepared fire; my strength left me, and I stood helpless. I was mad with a wild, uncontrollable desire to kiss her sweet lips, to take her in my arms. She sighed, and murmured some inarticulate words, and I knew that I must act at once if would preserve my manhood. Stooping again, I called her name (I dared not trust myself to touch her), and I added, whisperingly, "My little love." It was the only term of endearment I ever allowed myself to use until I came here, and it woke her, although she did not comprehend what I had said.

"What is it?" she asked, thinking, doubtless, that it was morning, and I her aunt, and for a moment, longer surely than an eternity, she looked innocently up at me with the languor of sleep still about her; then her maidenhood took the alarm suddenly, and springing



to her feet she faced me with all the innocent shyness, the sweet shame of a woman's pure soul surprised in its retreat, in her glance.

"Oh, Father Bertram!" she exclaimed, "where am I? What is the matter?" and her tone was wild with fear.

Gently I reassured her, as gently as though my own heart was not tearing at its anchoring boundaries like a wild thing struggling to get loose, and it was the priest who spoke, not the man—the man who began to die from that moment.

"You must have gone to sleep this afternoon, my child," I said calmly, "for I have just found you here, and it is very late."

"Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do?" she moaned, innocently laying her small white, cold fingers on my arm, where they burned like iron. "Auntie will be so worried about me and so angry, and I am afraid to go home alone."

The tears came again now, and she was looking at me through them, her face very pale, and her red, curved lips quivering.

"I will take you home, my child," I said kindly, and she was at ease in a moment.

"Let us hurry," was all she said, except to



ask how late it was, and when we were on the street she clung to me like a child. She was so innocent, so pure, dear little child-woman, that she never saw the smiles two of my parishioners exchanged when they passed us, with the light of an impudent street lamp flaring full upon her upturned face and tear-wet lashes.

But I saw, and this is what the first smile meant:

“Did you see that, my dear? Looks suspiciously like love-making, doesn’t it?” (Ah! my eyes were opened now, and there are times when even the blind can see.) And the other smile answered, easily and carelessly, “Oh, that’s all right, my dear, that’s all right. He’s a vowed celibate, you know; it’s all right. She’s safe enough.”

I knew I interpreted the smiles aright, and I did not wonder at the tenor of them. After the trouble Chicago has had with her ministers of the gospel—some of them rather—suspicion must necessarily be directed toward the whole calling more or less, and the tumult of my own heart did not give me the right to judge people for such hasty thoughts. Safe! Yes, she was safe enough, but what of me? I asked



myself this question as, after bidding my charge good-night at her aunt's door, I turned my steps back toward the church again.

Many a night had I spent in prayer and vigil, my perfect health and proud asceticism leading me rather to enjoy the process than otherwise, but to-night, with this fire of love in my soul, I realized the bitterness of cultivating a mediæval soul in a nineteenth century body. My convictions of the necessity of celibacy held firm, my intense reverence for a vow showed no signs of giving way, my love was strong as death—or jealousy.

Something must yield; what would it be? Instinctively I felt that the battle was but just beginning, and my heart was cold with horror as I entered the cold, silent sacristy, and closed the door upon all the world.

I wanted to wrestle with my soul in the perfect loneliness necessary when a wound is too new and sore to bear the light, or the touch of even a sympathizing finger; but what is so hard to bear as self-contempt—and who can shut out a man's thoughts?

And in the gray dawn of the following morning, when the cold mists were creeping



up from the lake in a ghostly fashion, uncovering the nakedness of the grimy, squalid city, and parting to show the shimmering, glimmering beauty of the great Inland Sea which embraces it, as a mother cherishes even the dirtiest and least lovable of her children, just as the first gleam of sunlight touched the somber waves and kissed them into flashing splendor, as the gentle hand of God turns despair to gladness, I dreamed a dream within a dream, and this was the dream I dreamed.



## CHAPTER IV.

### A DREAM OF PAST LOVE-LOOKS.

THE sun was shining down on the green fields of Assyria with a burning heat which made the cattle gather in the cool shade of the trees, only leaving it to stand knee-deep in the streams which sparkled happily and brightly in the hot beams, and the traveler who rode slowly down the road looked at them half enviously. He drew rein under the boughs of a spreading palm, and gazed for a moment at the lovely scene lying before him, the while he passed his hand wearily across his heated brow and bared it to the breeze, scarcely less warm than the atmosphere round him.

Suddenly his face lightened and his eyes smiled, for there before him, standing by the well, all unconscious of his presence, stood a maiden. She was not of his race, he knew,



for he belonged to the Israelites, and she to the land of Assyria, as was betokened by her garb, but she was very fair to look upon, and in his heart he yearned to see her more nearly.

Riding up to the well, he said, in a deep, vibrating, penetrating voice, "Maiden, wilt thou give me of thy water to drink? That in my flask is warm and far from sweet."

The damsel looked up at him as he sat his horse with a kingly grace, and into her dark eyes there came a gleam as of sacred fire, as they met his gazing so ardently upon her. In that moment each loved, and each knew it, although the maiden was already betrothed, and the man was an Israelite, and sworn never to marry a maiden of another race.

For a moment they studied each other silently, then the maiden dropped her shining eyes, and spoke slowly, sweetly, in a voice like the sound of gentle waters falling gently, laughing softly to themselves hidden deep in the heart of a forest, raising as she began, her round white arm, shrouded in part by its loosely folding draperies, and lifting her long, slender water bottle, filled to the brim with



a liquid so cool that the moisture stood on the outside in delicious, refreshing-looking beads, high to his saddle in order that he might drink his fill with ease.

"Surely my lord is welcome to my water, and I will draw for his beast also," she said softly, and smiled.

"Not so, fair damsel," he answered, leaping to the ground as he spoke, "I will myself draw for the beast and to fill the flask which I have emptied."

But she restrained him with her cool, small hands, and at the touch of them he was as wax.

"I myself will draw," she murmured softly. "My lord is weary and warm. Let him rest in the shade while I shall do mine own labor, then let him come with me to my father's house. The day will be long and hot, but in our poor habitation the air is always cool and grateful, and I will pull fresh figs, and bring the milk of goats for the refreshment of my lord."

"Nay, maiden, not so," responded the Israelite, the while his eyes devoured the beauty of her graceful form, and dwelt lingeringly on the small, white, sandaled foot which ever and anon peeped out from under-



neath the flowing white robe which veiled her limbs and swayed lightly in the wind as she bent down to the well with her empty vessels and rose with them filled to the brim, the drops sparkling on her white skin and rosy finger-nails, innocent of all save natural coloring; but even as he spoke he felt his heart yielding within him. Yet answered he bravely once more, and said: "I come from a far country, maiden, and am seeking to buy grain. My provender is in the bag which hangs from my beast, enough both for him and myself. Why should I trespass upon thy father's hospitality, seeing that he is an alien, and of a strange race?"

Now the maiden's eyes had flashed brightly at the word "alien," yet answered she gently:

"Am I even an alien? In our country we are wont to call all strangers friends and kin; but I have heard that it is not so in Israel. But if my lord desires to purchase grain, let him still come to my father's house, and he shall have it and to spare; our granaries are filled."

And so constraining him, she talked, and he, already deep in the waters of love for her, yielded, and went with her to her father's



house. And all that afternoon, long and sweet as only an Assyrian day can be, he sat with her in the shade of the house-vine, to await the coming of her father from the fields, and she waited on him with milk, and honey, and fruit, and sweet herbs.

And it came to pass that she so enticed him, albeit only with her sweet maidenliness and courtesy, that when he had agreed to purchase his grain from her father, and had partaken of the evening meal with them, he forbore to start on his journey while the cool dew of night was falling, as he had thought to do, and remained under her father's roof all night.

For a little space he wandered with her in the dewy, moonlit field, and when the youth to whom she was betrothed came and asked speech of her, he looked askance at him, and the anger of the youth was kindled so that he hated the Israelite, and spoke ill of him to the maiden; but the maiden allowed it not.

"He is a stranger, and our guest," she said, "and we have broken bread and eaten salt with him; I will not hear him evilly entreated."

And the youth left her in sadness, and went



out into the field to watch his flock with a heavy heart, for he feared that the maiden had said in her heart, "I love this stranger, even already," and he himself loved her sorely.

And the maiden gave no thought to her betrothed, but ever as she lay, waking or sleeping, on her couch, listening to the gentle lullabys of the wind and streams and night birds, she dreamed of the stranger, and he, too, dreamed of her. But his heart was troubled within him, for he thought, "I love her, and she is an Ishmaelite. How can I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my father's house?"

Yet in the morning, when she arose early, as was her custom, and went to the well to draw fresh water for the morning meal, and to milk the goats, he rose too, and wandered through the sweet dawning day with her, talking of many things but thinking of one only, —his love for her.

And the youth to whom she was betrothed saw them, and his heart was bitter within him, and he prayed for the stranger to continue his journey that morning.

But the stranger did not so: the rather he



stayed, for many days, and his heart and the maiden's grew more together each moment.

And when I had dreamed this dream within a dream I awoke, and took up the burden of the day and my life, with a heavy heart.

And in the dream of a life, which I am relating to you, I next dreamed this conversation between the aunt of Dorothy, and a young man who had come to visit her.



## CHAPTER V.

### A DREAM OF A RIVAL'S HAPPINESS.

"AUNTIE," said the young lawyer, Arthur Brampton, leaning forward toward his listener and hostess, and speaking with an earnestness very unusual with him, whom fortune had so favored that never in his whole life had he wanted a thing long enough and badly enough to feel the need of striving for it, "Auntie, I have a great favor to ask of you."

"Well, my dear," was the lady's answer, as she gently smoothed the waves of snowy white hair back from her pale, unwrinkled, aristocratic face, with a gesture habitual to, and characteristic of her, "Well, my dear, there are few things within the bounds of reason that I would not do for you, as you already know. I would do much for the sake of the love I have always borne you, but more for the reason you know of. A son of your



father's has but to ask from me, and I am ready to give."

Her fine eyes were a little dim with unshed tears, and there was a softness and sadness in her smile which her society friends would have found it difficult to associate with the stately lady who was the autocrat of her set, and given, as the world believed, to yield her will to that of no one else in the world.

I, Father Bertram, the poor young priest of St. Clement's church, could have told a different tale; I alone, perhaps, of all the world could have told how truly humble she was at heart, how tender her nature, how true her instincts for right and wrong, but I knew all this by virtue of my office, and I knew, too, how the world and its friends judge by the exterior alone, and are always convinced that a "society woman" is heartless. Shame on such a mistaken idea! No truer, tenderer, sweeter souls live behind the robes of the good sisters of charity than are hidden away beneath the costly dresses of many a "leader of fashion." Many a good deed do they do, all unknown and unseen of men, and many a dollar they give away from a charity-purse quite apart from that which fur-



nishes the funds which head subscription-lists and call forth newspaper panegyrics.

But to return to Mrs. Stonehenge. I knew that her cold manner was only manner, but I knew how it repelled many, and how the heart of her niece Dorothy pined, hungered, starved, for the love her aunt was so ready to bestow, had she only known how to express it. God help the dumb souls which cannot utter their feelings, and those which are compelled by the stern law of Karma or Fate to speak in a strange language, not understood of men, and bitterly hard to learn.

At the mention of his father, which Mrs. Stonehenge had made before I went off on one of the ecstatic protests against the things which are, which men are wont to sneer at and repress by all means, fearing that they would learn to speak too plainly and uncover the sore hearts of their fellows, but which are always allowed in this land of freedom and dreams,—at this reference to the father he had never known, the young man flushed, and answered lovingly: "Dear friend, do I not know all that? Have I not proved your friendship and affection many times, and especially when my will has come in contact



and conflict with that of my mother's husband, whom, much as you know I respect and love him, I can never agree with for long, do I not know how kind you are always to me? But the favor I am going to ask is so great that I hesitate to speak of it even to you."

He caught his breath sharply, stopped, and rising, walked to the window and stood gazing out into the street, while his friend, to whom he had been almost a son in duty, and more than a son in the affection which existed between them, looked at him anxiously.

Long years before, she had loved his father, but through a misunderstanding both had married others, and when the man had died, soon after the birth of his son, he had commended the baby to her love, and bespoken her special care in case, as he felt certain, his wife should marry again. Time, a very short time at that, had proven the truth of his surmise, and from the day of his mother's second wedding, the boy had spent more than half his time with Mrs. Stonehenge. She was his godmother, a fact which she regarded as giving her a sacred right to care for him, and the only sorrow he had ever given her



was when, in his college days, he had abjured Christianity and gone over to the ranks of agnosticism.

Her heart had nearly broken when he wrote and frankly told her of this, but her love had held firm, and the affection between them was far stronger than that which existed between the young man and his own mother, who was a kindly, light-hearted, merry-faced woman, oddly at variance with her grave, earnest husband and her brilliant son.

She loved them both, would have died for them at times; but she was a creature of impulses, and she found it impossible to understand the strong tides of feeling which now and then carried them far away from her mentally and spiritually.

"My husband and my son are a long way above my mental plane," she would sometimes tell her intimates, with an undercurrent of sadness jarring through the careless words, "but his godmother understands Arthur, so I let her look after that side of him. My husband" (always with a whimsical smile) "adores, pities and despises me, and I love and reverence him, so we all get along beautifully."



She was never jealous of Mrs. Stonehenge, although by fits and starts she longed passionately for the mother-love which she felt was denied her, and she had long ago resigned herself to hearing of his aspirations, successes and escapades, either through Mrs. Stonehenge, or after the latter had talked them over with her son. She had known for days, for Arthur was living at home at this time, that he had something on his mind, and had heard him announce that he would visit his "auntie"—a loving term of endearment he had given her in his childhood—that afternoon, with a strange wistfulness and sadness.

"I shall know what is the matter with him to-morrow," she said to herself, smiling with the unappreciated bravery and fortitude women show under the pin-pricks of hurt feeling which they have so often to bear, and she resolutely dismissed the matter from her mind.

Meanwhile the object of these two women's love stood at the window and twisted his mustache fiercely and silently, and Mrs. Stonehenge watched him thoughtfully.

He made no movement to return to her side or resume the conversation he had broken



off, so presently, after considering what his request could possibly be to cause him such disquietude, and arriving at no satisfactory conclusion, she remarked tentatively, "It—it— isn't about money, dear?"

"Money!" he answered indignantly, drawing his handsome form to its full height of six feet two. "Do you think that money would worry me as I am worried to-day?"

Money, from his disdain, might have been some utterly insignificant thing, utterly beneath the conception of an intelligent mind, but Mrs. Stonehenge was by no means impressed with this noble scorn of that which Youth despises—and longs for—and Age is apt to cling to, having lost all else.

"Then what is it, dear?" she asked, still more anxiously than before. "Be reasonable, and tell me what troubles you."

The young man stooped to pick up a pin which lay on the carpet, and carefully brushed a speck of dirt from his shining patent leather shoe before replying, but at last he crossed the room again, drew up a footstool to the side of his friend, and taking her hand in his, whispered shamefacedly, "I want Dorothy."

Mrs. Stonehenge sat up straight, and looked at him in wonder and astonishment.



“Dorothy!” she exclaimed. “Dorothy!” Then why in the world didn’t you say so, without all this fuss? What do you want with Dorothy?”

The young man made no answer, unless his sudden pallor might have been taken as such, but he clasped his strong, brown hands firmly together, and knitted his brows as his listener repeated laughingly, thinking that he had planned a pleasure of some kind:

“Well, confess. What mischief are you up to now? What do you want Dorothy for?”

Then the manhood of the human being at her side woke up suddenly, and cried aloud:

“What do I want Dorothy for, auntie?” he queried, in a voice which made her tremble, it was so intense. “What does a man want a woman for? I want her for my wife.”

Then, growing suddenly quiet and humble again, after the fashion of a lover, he said softly: “Auntie, I want her because I love her better than all the world. I know I’m not good enough for her, not fit to marry her; no man is pure enough, good enough to marry an innocent girl, but I do love her so.”

He was silent and Mrs. Stonehenge was silent too, for a moment, dumb with surprise.



Then she asked, in a curiously repressed voice, "And Dorothy? Does she love you?"

The young man lifted his face from the covering hands in which he had buried it, and answered, pale with emotion:

"I really don't know, auntie; she's so shy and innocent I can't tell. But—I hope so."

Mrs. Stonehenge smiled in spite of the sadness which had swept over her at this sudden announcement of her beloved's love for her niece, as she answered, "Well, my boy, if you hope so, I think it must be so in part anyway, although you have been so intimate with Dorothy in the short time she has been with me, that her regard for you might be so purely and completely liking, that she has shown it openly, having nothing to hide; still, I do not know," she finished in a low voice.

"What do you think?" asked the lover earnestly. "What do you think? You must know something of her feelings."

"I know nothing of her feelings," was the sadly murmured answer, as a tear fell on the lap of the speaker, "absolutely nothing. You know how unfortunate I am about inspiring love in the people near me, with the exception of yourself, dear,"—a sunny smile break-



ing through the tears which fell slowly, reluctantly, as they ever do when youth is past,—“and sometimes I think I made a mistake in allowing Dorothy to remain away at school so long. She grew away from me, if, indeed, she ever loved me, and I know less, far less, of her feelings than your mother, with whom she is in complete sympathy, to say nothing of your father, whom she is learning to love very dearly.”

“Yes, is it not delightful,” interrupted her listener, “how she loves them both? And they think the world of her. How lovely it will be when we are married! if, indeed,” (mournfully) “she says yes,”—the confidence of love fluctuating to despair after its manner,—“but really, auntie, I feel as though I should die unless I can have her.”

“Other men have felt that way before, my darling,” responded the other, “and have lived through it, but I sincerely hope you may not have this experience. And now, Arthur, to speak of a serious matter, if Dorothy should return your affection, what of religion? She is an earnest Christian, as you know, and you—do you think you, with your materialistic theories, which, however satisfying they



may be to a man, are empty and utterly inadequate to satisfy the needs of a woman's nature,—do you think that you are fit to have the care of, as a husband must have the care of a wife's soul in one sense, through his influence,—do you think you should have the care of a good girl's soul? How would your different views coalesce when the glow and glory of the honeymoon is past? Would you be able to bear with what you term 'her superstition,' or would you," regarding him sternly, "attempt to change her views to coincide with your own, using the lever of love to uproot the strongest part of her nature?"

Under her keen scrutiny the young man blushed, but he met her gaze firmly as he answered: "Auntie, I do not know about those things, I cannot tell. That I would love to have her think as I do I cannot deny, that I hate the very mention of that mediæval young man whom you both revere so much, and to whom she tells me she 'confesses,' it would be foolish and false to contradict, but just what we should agree upon I have never considered. You know she knows nothing of my freedom as yet. I have not told her. I will trust love," with a tender glance, "to find a way out of all such troubles."



Mrs. Stonehenge said no more, but her face remained troubled, and it was with an effort that she changed the subject, seeing how useless it was to discuss such matters with the self-willed darling of her heart, who was now fondling her hand in a way which few women could have resisted, and asked:

"But, my dear, how long has this been going on? How long have you loved Dorothy?"

"I don't know, auntie," was the frank answer, "I believe I loved her when she used to come here in the school holidays, and I know that I have loved her since she first came home to stay. But I'll tell you how I found it out. You remember the day when somebody had brought a baby to visit you, and Dorothy sat in the window there holding it when I came in?"

Mrs. Stonehenge nodded, and he rose to his feet hastily, throwing back the dark hair which, by continually falling over his wide, handsome forehead, annoyed and irritated him; beginning to pace the room, actuated by the wild instinct which possesses all creatures who are experiencing the pangs of love, he went on:

"Well, you know, I sat down by her, and



she looked so sweet that day, auntie; she had on a little white dress, and her eyes were as bright as stars, and somehow,—I don't know whether it was the baby, auntie," (Mrs. Stonehenge smiled again; she did not think it was the baby) "or what it was I don't know, but when I drew my chair close to her she smiled up at me, and held out her hand to bid me good-day. I had been away, you know.

"And, auntie, as I touched her, I knew that I loved her, and I could hardly keep from taking her in my arms then and there. But there were people here, of course, and then she was so unconscious. But I can't live without her, auntie; I *must* have her!" And he threw himself down on the stool again and yielded to an acute attack of lover's despair.

Mrs. Stonehenge was about to reply when a merry voice was heard lilting through the hall, and as it sang gaily, "For I will marry my own love, my own love, my own love," both started guiltily and looked at one another.

"Oh, auntie," the young man whispered, "oh, auntie, what if she should say no? Do you think she will?"

Somehow the lady did *not* think so, but she



only said, "Hush." Then speaking louder, as the girl parted the hangings of the door and stood looking at them with her sweet face dimpling and brimming over with gladness at some girlish joy, "Here she is to answer for herself. Dorothy, my dear," as the girl perched upon the arm of her chair and slipped an arm around her neck, filled with a sudden spasm of tenderness which broke through the wall of coldness and pride which she had built around her heart to hide the agonies of love-hunger and desire for its expression which sometimes reduced her to the depths of despair and made her doubt whether life was worth living, agonies which Mrs. Stonehenge never suspected but which Mrs. Brampton had somehow divined, and in which lay the keynote of their friendship,—as she did this, Mrs. Stonehenge continued, taking the small, dangling hand in hers, "Dorothy, my dear, this boy here has been telling me a secret, asking a great gift of me. Can you guess what it was?"

"Why, no, auntie," was the laughing answer; but a moment later, some look, some instinct, some soul-telephone told her, and she blushed fierily, divinely red, and was silent.



Her head sank onto her aunt's shoulder, with the desire for womanly sympathy every child of man feels in times of great happiness or strong emotion, and as Arthur tried vainly to control his voice, Mrs. Stonehenge lifted the drooping head, and looking into the frightened eyes she had to turn her neck so queerly to see, went on: "He wants to marry you, dear; what shall I say to him?"

The eyes were completely hidden now by the sweeping lashes, and the red lips quivered, but as Arthur, determined to plead his cause, quietly freed her other hand and took it in both his, she sighed, paled again, and softly whispered, "Yes."

He sprang to her side, lifting her in his arms, and the older woman slipped from the room.

She was wanted no longer, needed no more; for the first time in his life the child of her adoption did not notice her departure,—the bird had learned the use of his wings and would need the help of his soul-mother no more.

Mrs. Stonehenge was as glad in his joy as only a woman, unselfish and tender, or an angel pure and spotless, can be glad in the joy of another, but her heart was sore with



the pain of being supplanted, and not a few tears mingled with the prayers she said for the happiness of both her children,—the one who loved her less now than the one who could not love her because their natures did not understand each other, and the one she loved so dearly. There is a Gethsemane in every life, a time when we must all dree out our weird alone, and Mrs. Stonehenge had come to hers.

And I, in this life-dream of mine, ah! how I suffered when Dorothy told me, with blushes which broke my heart while they fired my love afresh, that she was engaged, and in the summer would be married! I did not know then that the man of her choice was an atheist, this pain was spared me at that time, spared me to come later and add the last straw to the load which killed me, the last thrust to the wounds which caused my heart to bleed to death, but I had an instinct against him, and this rendered it doubly hard to wish her happiness with another man, when I could not, by word or sign, tell or show her how much I longed for her love myself.

I was glad, thankful, in my better moments,



that she had not loved me in return as I loved her, since it was impossible that we should marry, but her innocent affection for me, so kindly and frequently expressed, as when she told me that she desired my blessing on her engagement because she "thought so much, so very much of me," nearly broke down my composure.

I left her abruptly then, retreating to the little sacristy which had been the scene of so many spiritual battles of late, battles so intense, so heart-rending that to have found the walls and floor bespattered with blood after one of these conflicts, the blood wrung from a tattered and pain-torn soul, would hardly have surprised me,—I retired, I say, to the sacristy, and knelt with my face buried in my hands until I fell asleep, and dreamed another dream within a dream.

And this was the dream I dreamed.



## CHAPTER VI.

### A DREAM OF A BREAKING HEART.

AGAIN in my dream within the longer dream which is called of men a life, I was back in the ancient land of Assyria; again I saw that fair young damsel in close and loving communion with the man from the country of Israel; again I watched them as they slowly, blissfully, learned the old, sweet, half-forgotten lesson which is so necessary to the happiness of the children of men, but which the humanity of to-day is striving so hard to eliminate from the curriculum of human knowledge; but this time the moon was lighting the sleeping earth.

It lay like the blessing of God, or the kindly gentle touch of a good, pure woman on the green fields, white with the ungathered harvest, and gleaming with flashing jewels of dew; it rested like a silvery garment on the brooks and streams, plashing softly as though



they, too, were dreaming pleasant dreams of laughter and gladness; it lent added loveliness to the beauty of the maiden as she walked with the Israelite in the fields of her father.

His strong, brown arm, uncovered to the cool refreshment of the summer night, was thrown lightly round her slender form; her head, freed from the sheltering, hiding draperies of the day, rested against his shoulder, and their faces were near together, even after the fashion and manner which is followed by the youth of this later day and generation.

His countenance was red and glowing with the fierceness of the love he bore her, but hers was white and glistening, transfigured with the splendor of her worshiping affection. The dark, sweet tendrils of her hair curled around it like the tendrils of a grape vine around the choicest clusters of the fruit it bears; the round, snowy column of her throat supported it as the marble pillars of the temple held it high above the earth in which it was planted. One small, strong, warm hand, trembling with the tumult of her heart, lay clasped in his, the other held back her white robe from the slender, sandaled foot, damp with the moisture of the field.



And thus they wandered while her parents rested, unconscious of her straying thus from the roof which should have sheltered her; and from the hill behind, the youth to whom she was betrothed watched her, and there was murder in his heart.

“She is mine own,” he murmured, as he forbore to care for the ewes and lambs in thus thinking of the girl to whom his soul was turned, but for whom he hungered in vain. “She is mine own, and promised to me, and shall I see this stranger steal her from me, without a blow?” And he was very wroth. But when he would have rushed down upon them and made war upon the Israelite, something not in himself held him back, so that he went not down. “I will trust in God,” he murmured yet again, “and He will right my cause,” and in prayer he forgot the sorrow which rent his soul. Yet turned he his face so that he saw not their happiness, and he knew not when the first embrace of love was passed between them.

For it came to pass that the Israelite bent lower toward the maiden presently, and his voice was as that of a cooing dove as he spake softly to her after this fashion:



"Maiden," he whispered, while she shrunk but little away, and did not resist nor refuse the pressure of his embracing arm, "Maiden, knowest thou not that I love thee?"

Now the maiden, although she had suffered him to love her, and although she knew in her heart that she loved him, and him only, yet, as is the manner of women, she was troubled at the thought of the youth to whom she was betrothed, and she answered not.

Then the Israelite spake to her again, and that which she heard was this:

"And dost thou not love me?" he asked, his lips quivering with emotion, "dost thou not feel that thine heart is tender toward me?"

Still she answered not, only she drew a little farther from him, and still he constrained her, saying, "Oh, mine own, my beloved, and the keeper of my soul, speak to thy servant! Tell me, mine heart's treasure, dost thou not love me?"

Then she answered, her voice choked with a torrent of happy, yet foreboding tears, "Thou knowest that I love thee; have I not stolen from my bed to wander here with thee, have I not disobeyed the parents who bore me, and been false to my betrothed, for thy sake?"



But thou knowest that I cannot wed thee, for I am promised to another."

Now the man of Israel had never dreamed of marrying the maiden, for he said in his heart continually, "How could I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my father's house?" but his soul was too weak for him to tell her this, seeing how ready she was to sacrifice the traditions of her race, yea, even the love of her kindred for the love of him; so did he dissemble, and said: "And wilt thou not break thine oath for my sake? What is thy betrothed to thee, seeing that thou lovest me? Promise me that thou wilt be mine and mine only." Yet did he not think to marry her, only to hold her his own for the joy of the moment.

And the maiden, her tears dried by his ardent words, yielded, and promised to be his, and he gathered her in his arms, and she knew nothing but his love and the passion of his embraces.

And when the day dawned, the maiden, pale with strong and mingled emotions and with the languor left by a sleepless night, stole back to her father's house,—and alas! she was a virgin no more. And her heart was heavy within her, but the heart of the



Israelite was filled with joy, for he thought:

“Now, indeed, by the God of Israel, is she mine, and mine only. Yet, when I must leave her” (for he thought to depart when the harvesting was done), “will she return to her betrothed, and he, poor fool, will receive her, being mad for love of her, and this wrong which I have done will be hid from the eyes of my people. Yet, would I could espouse her, could hold her mine always, but—how could I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my father’s house?”

And he knew not that for all the evil which men do, must they suffer, and he considered not the sorrow of the maiden when he should depart.

And the youth to whom the maiden was betrothed rose from his knees, when the sheep began to bleat in the gray light of the morning, and his heart, too, was sad, and rebellious also. And as he went down the hill carrying the lame lamb which the maiden had loved, he said: “Oh, would to God that I could seize that which is mine own! Would to God that I and the maiden were already married! Yet, surely will she love me when she is mine own, and the summer will soon



be over. Yet,—oh thou God of my fathers! do thou fight for me; I trust to Thee, thou Lord of Justice!” And he knew not that he was already undone.

And when I had dreamed this dream, lo, I awoke, and my heart was sad within me. Yet I knew not that it was because of the dream, and many nights and many days following did I dream like dreams, yet understand them not. But my soul grew more sad and dreary day by day, and although I longed for and loved the dream called Life, yet did I also long for the dreams which came to me while I slept, and they came to me more and more, until I scarce knew which was the Life-dream and which the visions of the nights.

Yet in my Life-dream I put my whole soul and it went on from day to day, until—the end. And next my Life-dream told me this following episode.



## CHAPTER VII.

### A DREAM OF APPROACHING SEPARATION.

AFTER Dorothy told me of her engagement, the dream which was Life became but sad to me, for what is so bitter as a vain struggle? And I could not conquer myself. All day, all night, sleeping or waking, at the altar or in my bed, or on my knees, I thought only of her, and day by day my love grew stronger. Ofttimes I was fain to leave my work, to seek a new field in a strange land, but I was not fit to teach innocent heathen with my own heart so rebellious, and then, too, I would not run away. Neither had I the relief of telling my grief to another, for when I had confessed my sin to my bishop, he only smiled, and told me to "marry the girl by all means."

Shocked, startled, horrified, I sprang to my feet, and the gentle, weak old man continued: "My son, your work will be just as acceptable to God, married, and this battle is too much for



your strength; it will hinder your work far more than marriage."

When I could speak I told him that the lady whom I so sinfully loved was already engaged, and he answered, "Well then, I will send you away from Chicago; you shall go to a country town and forget her in new surroundings."

He meant well, but I would not leave my parish; I was still strong enough to refrain from deserting, from lowering my colors, and when I was thus turned away from the bishop,—for he said, with a sad shake of his head, "Well, my son, go your own way, but if you fail come to me, and I will still send you away,"—when I was thus left to myself, I turned, as do all the sons of men when sorrow is near, to a woman for comfort and help.

She was the one woman whom I had always trusted, the one whose influence I had never feared, but now she, also, failed me.

"You are leading a forlorn hope, my dear," she said, laying a kindly hand on mine, after I had told her all, for she was one of the natural confessors of mankind, and to her every one told tales of sin and sorrow. "Be warned in time, and don't try to fight against



love. If you can marry the lady honorably, do so; if not, flee from temptation, and go away. You will never conquer love."

"I *will* conquer it," I cried, stung to anger by her words, which echoed the fear which, down at the bottom of my heart, oppressed me. "I will conquer it. A man's will is stronger than his weakness; and have I not the assistance of the Holy Spirit?"

I spoke loudly and my eyes burned, but she answered me gently and unmoved:

"The Holy Spirit is Love," she said, "and to fight against it is wrong, foolish. Yield to your love, let time purify it of all its lower qualities, and when the worst pain is over, the experience will give you a wondrous power over the hearts of men."

Her voice trembled slightly, but she was winding and unwinding the ribbon at her waist, and I did not know whether the faltering might not be due to this exertion, which swayed her body slightly every time she loosed the ribbon.

"How do you know the truth of what you say?" I demanded eagerly. "How can weakness give strength?"

"Does not strength ever proceed from weak-



ness?" she counter-questioned. "Was not the strength of the Savior born of weakness, and who that has never known temptation can sway others as he who, tempted, has conquered, and risen above the pain of the wounds received?"

Somehow I was indefinably comforted, yet still I was unwilling to accept her theories, and I went on: "But it is wrong for me, a sworn celibate, to love; how can I yield to my love, when it can never be more than a dream the very thought of which it is wrong to indulge?"

She smiled, satirically for her, yet gently as well, and her tone was tender, no less than deprecating as she answered:

"My friend, you are arguing from false premises; it is *never* wrong to love. The manner of loving, the quality of the affection may be at fault, but love itself, pure, unselfish love, is from God, and is always Good."

"But it cannot be right," I argued, "when it is forbidden, and forbidden it is for me, as you know."

"Who forbade it?" she asked earnestly, rising from her easy chair and confronting me. "Who forbade it? Not the Christ whom you try to serve, but his mistaken followers. No, do not interrupt me, hear me out."



"When you came to me, years ago, and told me, the only woman friend you have ever had, that you purposed becoming a celibate, I warned you then of your danger. I told you that for a man to fancy that because he builds a fence, not even a wall, but a frail fence, around an inflammable nature, it will be safe from danger when fire is applied, is worse than foolish, it is criminal. The fire will burn all the fiercer, the more intensely because of the confining fence, and the latter will only serve to keep out those who would assist in extinguishing it.

"This is what you have done; you, a man to whom love is a necessity, deprived by fate of the love of kindred, thought to enslave your heart to a loveless life. Don't you know that a slave, when once the chain is broken, is ten times more unruly than a reasonable being?

"You must yield to your heart, or it will eat itself out."

I tried to speak, to stem the torrent of her eloquence, but she would not listen, and with a sweeping wave of her hand she began again:

"Don't look at me so sternly; I mean no



disrespect to you or your religion. I quite understand that where a priest is to hear confessions he must of necessity remain unmarried, since, if he did not tell his wife of the secrets he heard, his penitents would be apt to believe that he did, and I am not decrying confession. In some cases, and for some natures, it is a needed ordeal, and in the abstract it is a good moral therapeutic, but you were, you *are*, the wrong kind of man to embrace so austere a faith, and, my friend," she leaned toward me, placed her hand upon my shoulder, and gazed searchingly into my face, "my friend, believe me, the religion which forbids love is a gigantic mistake. Love is of God, for God is Love."

I rose to my feet indignantly; this was more than I could stand.

"Do not speak evil of the Church to me!" I exclaimed.

She threw up her hands impatiently, wearily.

"Oh, the Church, the Church!" she said, scornfully. "Always the Church! Never the 'little ones' whom the Christ considered so precious, never the good of the individual, always 'the Church!' I am a Christian, or at



least I try to be one, but save me from the calm arrogance of attributing all good to the Church. Do you think that the tender Christ would consider the dignity of the church a moment, were it weighed in the balance with a human heartache? I fancy not; remember what he said of the edges of phylacteries, and the outside of the cup and platter. Which is the worst, to openly forswear your vow of celibacy and admit that you love like other men, or to carry a lie about in your life to nullify the good you try so hard to do? What is that but being a whited sepulcher?"

I was angry now, so angry that I could hardly speak, but I tried to articulate sternly, and I straightened my form as I had not done since my ordination (for, thinking to prevent pride, I had habitually bowed my head, and acquired a permanent stoop in my shoulders), as I angrily told her:

"I came to you for comfort and help, but all you offer me is ridicule of my most revered beliefs!" Then, in my manly egotism and cowardice, I turned to scorn and reproached her with: "It is the old story of 'the woman tempted me' again, as ever, in the lives of men; why will women use their influence for so poor an end?"



When I had said this I was immediately ashamed of myself, and I looked for her to address me in anger, but she only smiled pityingly.

"Oh, foolish boy!" she said, "oh, foolish boy, to think that in your short life you have had time to know or understand women. Wiser men than you know that to comprehend the mysteries of one woman's nature is the work of years, and you who have never known, really known any woman besides myself, think that you can say what 'all women' do or feel. Oh, foolish boy! 'Man is a fool,' says the Spanish proverb, but 'Man is an egotist' would be nearer to the truth in my opinion. The sum of a man's ignorance can generally be measured by the amount of his fancied knowledge!"

She was angry too, now, and I was so incensed by the contempt, but little veiled, in her tone, that I rose to go.

"Good-bye," I said stiffly. "I am sorry I troubled you, but I trusted to your long friendship for me."

"I never was a truer friend to you than I am now," she answered, calmly, even a little bitterly, "and I meet the reception which is



so often accorded to the friendship which will not take its color, chameleon-like, from the changing opinions of the one who inspires it. When I say to you, 'Forget your vow,' the vow which should never have been made, at least until your nature was more seasoned; yield to the love which is God-sent, God-given, to teach you a lesson which you will not learn, a lesson of forbearance and charity for the faults which you, in your cold perfection, find it hard to even tolerate, you who are, in spirit, thanking God even now that you are not as other men; when I say to you that it is useless to fight against love, I tell you the truth, and you will not accept it."

Her cheeks were flushed, her lips trembling, her eyes shining like stars, but her manner was quiet, and her voice persistently hushed to its usual low, clear sound.

"How do you know it is the truth?" I burst out, and she looked at me strangely, before replying:

"Because I have learned in the one school which admits of no mistakes," she said, with a sound of tears running through the plaintive words, "the school of experience, in which even fools learn at last."



For a brief moment she gazed full at me; then it was I who, blushing, turned away my eyes, for I felt that I had caught a glimpse of the hidden chamber of a soul. I had a fleeting remembrance of once hearing that she, in her youth, had loved a man who had jilted her, and I knew instinctively that she had suffered all that I was now going through, and that her knowledge was indeed of the kind which is worth having.

"Forgive me," I murmured, but she asked, rather haughtily, "For what? Your hastiness, and unwillingness to profit by my advice? I too, should ask pardon, for pressing it upon you. Let us forgive mutually."

I would have spoken upon the subject of her love, but she so impressed me by her calm dignity that I could not; so, shaking her hand formally, I bowed and left her presence.

And so we parted, I and the woman who, in the days of my lonely boyhood, when a boarding school had been my only home, had taken pity upon me and invited me to spend my holidays at her home, together with her nephew, who was my Fidus Achates. And when, years afterwards, the nephew had died, she had put me in his vacant place, and be-



come the mother of my soul, if not of my body.

And now she had failed me, as I bitterly thought, and my heart was very hard and stern when I thought of her, and I resolved, cloaking my anger under the garb of duty, to visit her no more. She had wounded my feelings, my sensibilities, I angrily thought, but now, up here, I know that it was only my vanity and mistaken sense of dignity which suffered.

From her house I went to that of Mrs. Stonehenge, for the argument with Miss Alford had given the false strength of excitement to my nature, and, foolhardy as ever, I rushed to face the foe.

Dorothy herself opened the door to me, and my heart throbbed quick at sight of her.

It beat more quickly still when she said, laying gentle hands on the hat and coat which I declined to surrender, "Indeed you must, dear Father, for I want you to meet my—my—Mr. Brampton," with a glorious blush; "he is in the parlor, and you must learn to know him at once."

I would have somehow avoided this at another time, but now, with the false strength upholding me, I felt the afflatus which compels wounded soldiers to rush madly into dan-



ger, the foolish heroism which makes them mad, and I acquiesced.

A moment later she led me into the room, and in answer to her murmur of "Arthur" a tall, fine, handsome fellow rose to his feet and faced us.

"Arthur," she said, joyously, "you must be sure to like Father Bertram, because I love him so much." Dear heart, if she had only known how her words were like cutting swords!

"Father Bertram," she went on, "make up your mind immediately that you like Mr. Brampton fully as much as you do me." And thus she chattered until Mrs. Stonehenge came downstairs.

All this time I had been fancying that the young man's carriage towards me had a distinct air of hostility, and when he at last spoke I knew that this was so in truth, and not a vagary of my excited brain.

"I suppose," he said, contemptuously regarding my bent form and clerical garb from his lazy, well-dressed height, as he leaned gracefully against the mantel, admiringly watched by Dorothy, "I suppose, Mr. Bertram, that you are responsible for all the



foolish things which Dorothy believes and practices in the way of religion."

He spoke laughingly, and I knew that both of his other hearers fancied he was joking, but my sensitive ear recognized the sarcasm underneath the veil of amusement, and it grated upon me to see the air of proprietorship he assumed, and hear him say "Dorothy" in that careless way; I sometimes whispered her name as I would have done that of a saint. So that when I spoke it was stiffly, and with a coldness which made both Dorothy and her aunt glance quickly at me.

"I prefer to be called by my title, Father Bertram," I began, but he interrupted me with, "Oh, certainly, certainly, if you like; *Father* Bertram by all means, but the term seems ridiculous when speaking of a man so young as yourself."

He smiled satirically, and in a moment I knew the reason of his bitterness. He was jealous of my influence over Dorothy; she had probably talked much of me, dear little child, and his love had taken the alarm.

But even while I thus explained it to myself, I vaguely wondered why I myself should feel so unreasonable a desire to annoy



him, why a feeling so like that of hate should taunt me whenever I looked at his hateful, smiling face. Now, in the land of dreams, I know why; our spirits recognized each other as ancient foes, and prepared for battle.

But in spite of these thoughts, these instincts, I answered him with a calmness which made his anger more apparent.

"The Church knows nothing of age," I said in my most clerical manner; "the title of Father does not refer to material, but to spiritual things."

"Oh, indeed," he sneered, with an intonation which made Mrs. Stonehenge glance warningly from himself to Dorothy and back again, "Oh, indeed; very pretty, I am sure."

I felt my blood growing warm, and my temper rising, but I continued calmly:

"I hope that I have not taught *Miss* Dorothy" (I could not resist accenting the prefix, although I always called her by her name) "anything which is foolish; I certainly have tried to teach her much that is good and right."

"In my opinion she would be better untaught," he responded, white with a sudden anger; "a good girl knows what is right her-



self, and I have a very poor idea of priestcraft."

"Fortunately for the world, your opinions are not shared by the good girls themselves," I retorted, still quietly, but too angry to still the trembling of my hands, a fact which he triumphantly noticed, and gloried in, I knew, and thus we continued until Mrs. Stonehenge put an end to the duel of words by announcing that dinner would soon be served, and that I must remain. She would take no refusal, and indeed I offered but a slight one, for I longed for another chance to meet my enemy, as I now openly called him to myself, and I could see by the determined look of our hostess that she would allow no more discussion for the present.

"Sing us something, dear," she said to Dorothy, and the girl, with the ready compliance with the wishes of others which made her so winsome, went to the piano at once.

She had often sung to me, and I now asked her to render a favorite of mine, but at the same moment her lover broke in with, "Sing that song I love, dear," and with a pretty smile she said she would give us both.

But she sang his song first, of course, and



while she was still singing joyously, her voice rising now and then into a perfect rapture of gladness, "Oh, thou art all the world to me, sweetheart, sweetheart, sweetheart," he asked for another, and she, forgetting me, sang it to him.

I did not mind, for the words of her song had thrilled through me and I was lost to all else.

"All the world to me, all the world to me," I repeated vaguely to myself, and Arthur Brampton, hearing the muttered ejaculation, laughed and remarked: "Father Bertram" (oh, the maddening derision of his tone!) "is so charmed with 'Sweetheart,' Dorothy, that he is saying the words over again."

"It is a pretty thing," she said sweetly, flashing a kind glance at me, then went on singing, while I, upset by the tumult of contending emotions boiling up within me, reverted to my own sad thoughts. For the time being I had forgotten the Church, my vow, everything but my love for her, my love,—and my despair.

"All the world," aye,—and a lost world. Tears came into my eyes, tears which I bent my head to conceal from the cruel gaze of my



opposer, and my heart was very full when—

“Dinner is served, madame!” was announced, and we all went to the dining-room.

At the table it was the same,—open scorn on his part, repressed anger on mine, until Dorothy, with the grief a girl feels when two of her friends will not “make up,” grew pensive, and looked reproachfully from one to the other.

“Nobody is as nice as usual to-night,” she said plaintively, as she left us, in company with her aunt. “Now don’t be long, for I want you to sing for me, Father,” (I always did so when dining at the house, which happened so frequently that it was an odd series of accidents which had prevented a former meeting between Brampton and myself) “and Arthur,” with a pretty, pleading look, “I want you because—I want you.”

Her voice was a sweet whisper as she finished, and I could have killed him for the calmness of his glance as he received her hand, which she laid lightly on his as he held the door open for her.

“No, I won’t be long, little girl,” he answered, smiling, “your friend and I have but little in common.”



"Then will you excuse me if I go with the ladies," I asked, "since I do not smoke, and this being Friday I shall drink no wine?"

"Why, of course you can't go," he said with the familiarity I found so unpleasant. "you must stay and talk of Dorothy with me."

Again I winced at his careless use of her name, but he did not appear to notice it, and went on, as he leaned back in his chair, poisoning his lighted cigar lightly between his slender, well-shaped fingers, and pouring out a very generous glass of wine. "Perhaps you will take a glass of seltzer, since your religious scruples" (another half-concealed sneer) "do not allow of anything stronger."

This I declined, saying that I preferred plain water, then, following his lead, I too leaned back in my chair, and waited, with what quietness I could command, for the attack which I knew he contemplated.

Nor was it long in coming. Presently he blew the smoke daintily away from between us, and looking sternly at me, he inquired with seeming lightness: "Do I understand that Dorothy makes confessions to you?"

It was my turn now to tease him, so I took my time about replying; then, just as he



could control his impatience no longer, I said haughtily: "Miss Dorothy is certainly one of my penitents, but it is a matter which confessors do not care to discuss. Indeed they have no right to do so."

"Indeed!" he sneered, "and do they have the right to presume upon the foolishness of their 'penitents'" (his face like a smiling devil's) "to give advice upon other subjects?"

"We try not to 'presume,'" I told him, coldly, "and I think we seldom do." Then the instinct of cruelty getting the better of my good nature, "It is true that we often receive confidences outside the confessional and know much of the affairs of our penitents."

He dropped his cigar, sitting up straight and clenching his hand as he fairly hissed, "And does Dorothy tell you her private affairs—about myself, for instance?"

"She has not, so far," I replied, wickedly delighted at the result of my revenge for his unneeded insults (ah, if I had known how, in the days which were yet to come, he would revenge himself upon me for all the past wrongs he had received at my hands!) "but she is very ready to talk of you."



The anger died out of his face and was replaced by a malicious amusement.

"I shall try to prevent such a thing occurring," he said quietly, so quietly that the contrast between his present manner and that of a few moments ago was very marked, "and I warn you that when she is my wife she will confess to you no more."

"That will be as she pleases," I answered with a strange heart-sinking, and he smiled again as he responded, "Or as *I* please, which in this instance is about the same thing."

"It should be the same," I remarked; "in the perfect love which the Church recognizes, no thought of difference between husband and wife can exist, and the husband is the head of the wife; the Bible teaches it."

For several moments he made no reply, then, flicking the ashes from where they had fallen on his sleeve, he murmured languidly, "You will take nothing? No? Then shall we join the ladies?"

I acquiesced gladly, but I knew, as I followed him up the stairs, that it was to be war between us, and war to the knife. And poor Dorothy, who loved him so, and was so fond of. so attached to me! Poor Dorothy!



I was not asked to sing that evening, for he took Dorothy to the conservatory while I greeted Mrs. Stonehenge, and he entertained her so well that when I rose to depart at ten o'clock, she came out blushing, and explained that she had not noticed how the time passed.

"I suppose not," said Mrs. Stonehenge, indulgently, as I smiled down upon her, and her lover smiled too, as she made no answer, save to blush again and more deeply.

There was undoubted and unmistakable triumph in his eyes, but I was triumphant too when I left the house, for she followed me out into the hall to ask me to be in the sacristy at a certain hour the next day, as they were all going away (it was a new thing, I knew, for it had not been mentioned to me before; doubtless he had planned this since dinner), and she wanted to make a confession to me.

And this is what I dreamed that night.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### A DREAM OF A MAIDEN'S SORROW.

ONCE more the calm, peaceful moonlight silvered the fields of Assyria, once more the maiden and the Israelite walked hand in hand through the dewy, silent pastures, once more the youth to whom she was betrothed watched them from the high hill behind the brook; but this time the maiden wept sore as she clung to her lover, and would not be comforted, albeit he embraced her tenderly and held her close to his heart. For the Israelite had said: "My beloved, thou knowest that ere the moon shall be low in the heavens again, the harvesting will be past and over, and then must I go to mine own country, and bid thee farewell."

"But shall I not surely go with thee?" she asked, her wide, sweet eyes gazing suddenly up at him. "Why shouldst thou then bid me farewell? Surely thou wouldst not leave me



alone to tell my kindred of my broken vow, and the sin into which thou hast led me!"

"Nay, rather thou ledst me," he answered with wrath in his tones, "for I was ever a good son of Israel until I saw thy fair face."

"And I, too, didst never err or stray from the path of righteousness until I loved thee," she said brokenly; "surely, then, this love of mine and thine is not holy, as thou hast taught me, but evil, since it has tempted us both to do wickedly."

Now the Israelite was troubled, for he had thought that the maiden would yield to his departure readily, he not knowing the power and strength of a woman's love, and he sorrowed greatly to see her thus weeping; but when she stilled not her sobs, nor hushed her tears, only clung the closer to him and mourned the more in the abandonment of her grief that he would thus desert her, and leave her lonely to bear the sorrow and shame which awaited her, he grew angry once more.

"Art thou a child to weep thus?" he cried, and he would fain have shaken her drooping head from his shoulder, but she held him the tighter, and answered, "Would God that I were indeed a child, for then would my father



protect me and my mother comfort me, but now I am indeed desolate. When thou shalt have gone I shall die."

For she thought in her heart that he would repent and take her with him. But he repented not, and presently he said yet again.

"Thou art a foolish child to weep thus for me. Go back to thine own lover, and he will comfort thee. He is mad for love of thee, and thou shouldst recompense him for the pain he has endured at thy hands this summertime."

But she would not be so entreated, and he was fain to persuade her with tender words and caresses.

"See, then, my beloved," he began, his voice gentle, and his hands holding hers, "see then, my heart's delight, how could I, indeed, marry thee? Surely thou art of another race, and the men of Israel do not wed with strangers."

"And callest thou *me* a stranger?" she moaned, her tears falling like the large drops which presage a storm. "Am I no more than a stranger to thee? Surely thou didst tell me but a short while since that I was more to thee than father or mother or friends or kindred."



"Thou art indeed more to me than all these," he said again, seized with a fresh passion of love, "but yet cannot I marry thee. How could I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my father's house?"

"Then go not to thy father's house," she murmured, softly, her head on his breast, her soft, cool arm pressed closely round his throat. "Go not to thine own land again. Thy people will mourn thee as dead, and we can live here for ever, in happiness. My people will receive thee, and thou canst take my Gods for thine."

"And thy betrothed?" he asked her, with a cold sneer curving his lips. "What shall he do when this shall come to pass?"

His tone struck fear to her trembling heart, but his words were like honey to her soul, and she raised her head joyously.

"He will marry another, when we shall tell him the truth," she whispered. "There is mine own cousin who is so like me. He will be happy with her, and she loves him already. But speak not of him, beloved, for the remembrance of his pain stings my gladness in thy company, and when we are married he will cease to mourn."



"But, my mandrake," was the Israelite's answer, "we can never be married. Have I not told thee so? This summertime has been a sweet dream, and as a sweet dream must we forget it. It has been all a dream, beloved, all a dream, and we must return to the paths of duty once more, and in the winter which is coming forget each other. It has been all a dream."

His voice was sad, his face sorrowful, but the demeanor of the damsel was as bitter gall.

"And what of my shame?" she moaned. "What of my shame? Is that, too, a dream? Oh, would God, would God it were! I am undone, and thou—thou art a coward, and the son of a worm, to leave me to face the bitterness alone."

Now the Israelite was glad to see her thus angry, for he dreaded her weeping, and he knew that wrath drieth up the fount of tears, so he answered scornfully, "Go back to thine own lover, I say, and let him hide thy shame for thee. He will do it, being mad for love of thee, and I will depart after the harvesting is over."

But at these words her wrath melted, and she flung herself upon him, crying out, "But,



love, it cannot be! I love thee, and thou lovest me, I know thou lovest me; make me thine own in name as I am in soul and body, and take me with thee, or else stay here forever with me." And again she wept bitterly and clung fast to him.

Now the wrath of the Israelite was kindled against her, and he spake hotly.

"I cannot take thee," he raged, "and neither will I forswear mine own kindred and mine own God for the wicked love of thee."

"Then why didst thou tempt me?" she asked him pitifully. "Why didst thou not tell me that thou wouldst never marry me?"

But he heeded her not, save to unloose her clasping arms, but continued: "My God has forbidden that I should marry an alien, and thy God must care for thee; I must wed a damsel of my father's house. Behold even now she waits for me in the tent of her mother, and wonders at my long tarrying."

"And thou wilt go to her, and leave me to mourn!" said the maiden sadly. "Then is thy religion vain." (And she was right, indeed, for men know now that "there is no religion higher than truth.")

But the Israelite answered angrily, "My



religion is *not* vain; surely I have kept the strict letter of the law, save when I sinned with thee, and thou art an alien, and thy people given to us to despoil. I love thee dearly, aye, wickedly, as thou knowest full well, yet can I never marry thee, for how can I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my father's house? And neither will I forswear my God for thee. I would forswear my very soul for thee, but I must yet hold to my religion."

"Then thou art base," was the damsel's weeping answer as she turned away, but a moment after she fell upon him again and besought him, "Oh, go not away from me or I shall die," and her voice was gone from her in the tempest of her weeping.

But the Israelite answered nothing, only he stood as a stern rock, and his face was like that of a carven statue.

"It cannot be," he said in his heart, "it is my duty to bid her farewell. I cannot wed her, and I must depart."

But his heart was heavy within him, and his soul troubled, although he spake no word aloud and would not return the maiden's embraces.

So it came to pass that after a little space



she loosed her hold upon him, and hiding her face in her mantle, went slowly away.

And the Israelite cast himself down upon the grass and wept sore, and the youth on the hill behind him was mad with anger, and drew his sword. "She is weeping," he said, "and that stranger has caused her tears, while I,—I would shed my last drop of blood for her. If he comforts her not on the morrow, I will kill him."

Then he knelt slowly down, clenching his hands, and prayed God for vengeance upon the head of the Israelite.

And while he prayed the moon was hidden behind a cloud, and the maiden went slowly up the hill, and she wept sorely.

Yet on the morrow was she comforted, for she thought, "He cannot mean it; he will surely take me with him," and the Israelite was kindly in his manner toward her, and she was so happy that the youth to whom she was betrothed spared the Israelite, and the latter knew not his danger.

And so the time passed until the moon was full, and the harvesting drew near.

And this was all I dreamed that night, but on the morrow I went on with the longer dream called Life.



## CHAPTER IX.

### A DREAM OF THE BITTERNESS OF PARTING.

SHE came to me the following day, my dear, sweet love, my love whom I could never claim, my love of centuries ago, my darling Dorothy, and told me of her coming journey. And every word she spoke was as a sword-thrust in my heart, for through her voice, the voice which had swayed the pulses of my being for so many thousand years, I heard the tones of her lover, the man who had claimed her, won her, taken her for his own, my rival and my bitter enemy, as our souls well knew.

"We are going to the mountains," she told me joyously, "auntie, and Arthur and I. And we shall have such a lovely time, I know. I have always wanted to travel so much, you know, don't you?"

(Yes, I knew. How many times she had told me of her longing to go away! How many times I had wept in spirit to think that I should never be able to take her!)



"When are you going, my child?" I asked in my most clerical manner, for weak as the armor was, it was still the only protection I had against the temptation to yield to my love, and she answered, with her pretty, gay smile:

"Just think how soon! You'll never be able to guess, so I'll tell you. We are going to leave Chicago the day after to-morrow. Auntie says that we can get all the clothing we need in New York, and Arthur is so anxious to go."

"How long are you going to stay?" I inquired, ignoring her raptures, which hurt me sorely, in the light of my inability to share them. "When do you expect to return?"

A quick stab cut off my breath, a sharp pain which ran through my heart and stopped its beating as she replied: "Auntie thinks we shall probably come back in September." (Ah me! so long, so very long, before I should see her dear face, or hear her sweet voice again! I knew I should have rejoiced at being removed from temptation, but human nature is always human, no matter how long and heavy the priestly robes, and I could not but sorrow.) "And Arthur" (the pretty hesita-



tion each time she mentioned his name, hurt me to the very quick of my nature. What had he done to merit such love?) "Arthur thinks that we had better stay until a day or so before—before—our wedding," she continued, with a blush which made her more lovely than ever. "He says that auntie could come on ahead of us, and send out the invitations, and all that, and we could visit friends meanwhile. I don't see why he wants to do so," she finished, but I saw; I knew he wanted to prevent her from seeing anything more of me, the cowardly wretch to judge all men by his own miserable nature.

A few seconds of reflection induced me to take a more reasonable and charitable view of his conduct, however, and my voice was quite natural, my manner perfectly calm as I answered: "It is very easy to understand his motive, my child. He very naturally wants to have you all to himself during the last few days of engagement. And is the wedding day set?"

"We have not yet decided upon it," she answered, with another flood of color rushing over her face and snowy throat, "but it will not be later than October."



I turned away, sick at heart, but I knew that she was innocently gazing up at me (I was standing on the steps of the vestibule, where I had waited for her, and she seemed even smaller than usual that day, with the new droop in her neck, and the new humbleness of carriage. Oh, Dorothy! beware of the lover who makes his betrothed feel so humbled,—not at the wondrous mystery of Love which has come to her, but at the grandeur of the man who has introduced it to her), and after a moment I looked down at her again.

“I have not yet congratulated Mr. Brampton, Dorothy,” I said slowly, and as cordially as I could manage to do, “nor wished you happiness. Let me do so now, my child. I shall never cease to pray for your welfare.”

“Thank you,” she whispered, bending her head with a sweet, new shyness under my hot glance, “I know you will. And you—you—will marry me—us—won’t you?”

She looked pleadingly at me, as though half fearing I should refuse, and the knowledge, unthought of, unrealized before, that in all probability I should have to personally deliver her over to the care of another man, a man whom, in my innermost heart, I distrusted,



smote me with a fresh pang. And yet,—could I bear to know that any one else had done so? Ah, if I had only known, if I had only known! But, fortunately, poor human hearts *never* know such things. Thank God that they do not! Quite enough break as it is.

“Certainly I shall marry you,” I told her, with an attempt at something like cheerfulness. “Who else should do so?” and I smiled with a ghastly effect of suppressed merriment.

“Don’t laugh at me, please,” she said, deceived by the effort which cost me so much. “Don’t *you*.” (I fancied a faint accent upon the pronoun. Did *he* laugh at her? I wondered bitterly.) “Don’t *you* laugh at me. You know I wouldn’t let any one else marry me,” and she laid a caressing hand upon my black sleeve, the sleeve which I was growing to hate as the symbol of my slavery. But for it, and what it implied, I might at least have made a struggle for her love, perhaps even succeeded in winning it before the other made his appearance. I despised, dreaded, hated such sacrilegious thoughts, did severe penance for them, but they *would* recur, spite of all my efforts, whenever she was near. That bit of woman’s flesh and dainty skin set all my heart and blood afire.



She still looked up at me earnestly, with the pleading look only seen in the eyes of a tender woman,—or a dog,—and I knew she felt that something was missing from my spoken congratulations. She wanted some warm commendation of her lover, some word of liking or respect for him, and I had none to give. So presently, with a deep sigh, for a feeling she could not express, and did not more than half understand, she said she had promised him to hurry back, and must proceed with her confession.

“It will be the last I shall make for some time,” she said, a little wistfully, “for I should never have the courage to talk to a priest whom I did not know, and then, Arthur” (always Arthur) “says that we shall not stop long in any one place. And I shall miss your help so much,” she went on, with a sad sigh over her own faults, “and I am so wicked. But you always comfort me,” she finished, happily.

Poor little child, how much of the comfort was spiritual, how much merely sympathetic? I know now, but I did not then, although I had a dim suspicion.

So we went into the sacristy, while she



meekly told me of her faults. And such small sins as they were! the chief of them being that she loved her fiancé too much. "I cannot help thinking of him all the time," she whispered penitently, "even at my prayers, and although I know how wrong it is, I don't seem able to help it."

For once, then, my higher wisdom vanquished my priestly lore. "It is not wrong, my child," I said quickly, "it is perfectly right; you are only following unconsciously the law of God. Love is never wrong."

She was very happy at this, and it gave a lovely light to the face she turned toward me, when, after a few moments of attempted prayer, I rejoined her in the vestibule, where she was waiting to bid me good-bye. I talked of her class in Sunday school, of her aunt, of her lover, anything to keep her near me a little longer, anything to put off the parting which my intuition, the much abused faculty which I scorned then, told me would be more than an ordinary one; but all too soon she grew restless, hesitated and finally said that she must hurry.

"You see I promised Arthur to visit his mother this afternoon," she said, "and you



know," with a roguish smile, "that I have heard you say many times that an engaged girl is really married, spiritually speaking, and that a wife" (oh, the beauty of her blush, the winsome loveliness of it!) "should obey her husband."

"Quite right, Dorothy," I answered, true to my duty at last, although my whole soul rebelled against it, "quite right. A true engagement, the Church teaches, is as sacred as marriage itself. A wife should obey her husband in all things, and you cannot make a better beginning for married happiness than to recognize this truth."

Up here, in Devachan, I know the falsity of the law which makes a woman subservient to a man save where the perfect love which precludes obedience on either side exists, but alas! I knew so little, and fancied I knew so much, in those sad earthly days.

She laughed, the dear little girl, laughed out in the happy, hearty, innocent fashion peculiar to joyous girlhood, and her eyes danced with mischief as she remarked, merrily, "I shall tell Arthur that the reason of my tardiness was because you kept me to listen to a lecture on the sacred nature of engagement vows, and the duties of wifely obedience."



I smiled with a brave effort to let her enjoy her laughter, undimmed by cold looks, and again those laughing eyes looked gayly up into mine, filled with despair and the bitterness of acknowledged defeat.

The laughter was replaced by something very like tears a moment later, for when she said, "Good-bye, dear Father, good-bye, and pray for me,—and Arthur," she was greatly moved. Perhaps she, too, divined that our pleasant relations were over and that we should meet as friends no more.

"Good-bye, my child," I answered, steadying my voice with an effort, "good-bye, and God bless you."

She held out her hands; I took them both in one of mine and laid the other on her head in blessing, and when I had finished speaking she raised her face and looked the farewell of her soul. I was tempted sadly, sorely, to bend and kiss her white brow just where the delicate love-locks shadowed, touched, caressed it, and she would have thought nothing of such an action, the pure soul! but her lover,—and she told him everything. And then, my own honor. Sternly I restrained myself, and merely released her hands, and she,—she wept.



"I am so sorry to say good-bye to you," she told me frankly and innocently, "for you have been so good to me, and I love you for it."

"No, you do not love me, Dorothy," I said, in what I fear was a strange tone, "but you have an affection for me, as I have a pastoral feeling" (God forgive me the lie!) "for you. And I hope you will always remember my admonitions and teachings."

"I will, I will," she sobbed, "and I will always try to follow your example."

Oh, mockery of admiration! Bitter punishment of sin! I had to hear her praise and could not say how undeserved it was!

And then I gave her a little gift I had procured for her that morning, a bookmark of purple ribbon, with a silver crucifix on one end and a Greek letter at the other.

"Oh, is it for me?" she said, delightedly. "How very kind of you! And I have nothing for you," sorrowfully, "I was going to embroider you a sermon case, and send it to you, but Arthur thought it would be silly to do so. Would you have liked it?"

"Very much," I said as soon as I could quell the tempest of anger which rose within



me at the thought of his interference with her kindly thought for me, "very much, but do not make it now, my child; enjoy your holiday with your lover." (I turned away; I could not bear another blush, I was so weak.) "All your duty is to him now."

"I know it," she responded, her regret gone, "and you always understand what I mean, anyway. This is so pretty," and she fondled the trinket with the loving touches women bestow so readily upon anything dainty.

"Keep it," I told her, "in remembrance of—" I wanted, had intended to say "your church duties," but I could not. Something choked me, and I said instead, "as a remembrance of me."

"Indeed I will," she replied, sweetly, "I shall put it in my Bible, and think of you whenever I see it. Good-bye, good-bye."

And with a last hand-pressure she was gone,—gone from my life, but not, alas! from my heart.

I stood on the step of the church and watched her out of sight, regardless of the inquisitive glances of the passers-by, with something of the feeling with which one



watches the last carriage of the funeral train which is carrying a dearly-loved friend to the grave, and, if I had known it, she was indeed dead to me, dead and buried deeper than if miles of earth had been piled above her.

When I returned to the church I found on the floor her little glove which she had dropped, and the kiss I imprinted upon it was surely forgiven of God, for it was a caress such as is pressed upon the face of a corpse. I put the glove carefully in my pocket, but upon second and better thoughts placed it in a draw where I knew the janitor kept lost articles until called for; I took it out twice, murmuring loving phrases over it, and when I finally put the sweet temptation from me, tears dropped from my eyes, and blood from my heart.

"Oh, my darling, my sweetheart, my little love!" I whispered, as I knelt down on the lowest chancel step, and then—then some one came to ask for me, and I—was a priest again.

Early the next morning Mrs. Stonehenge came to the church to make her adieus, and she brought me a note from Dorothy.

"The dear child could not come herself."



she said, apologetically, "or at least Mr. Brampton did not wish her to do so. He wanted her to save her strength (she is not very strong, you know, and he is *so* careful for her), so she wrote a note and sent it by me. But I know she felt badly, for she looked so sad."

"Miss Dorothy bade me good-bye yesterday," I answered calmly, "and the note is doubtless something concerning her class-work."

But I knew that this was not so; when first I had received the note, my fingers had involuntarily gripped it tightly, and I had felt the shape of a cross through the thick, satiny paper. So he had compelled her to return my gift. My heart was full of bitterness as I talked with my visitor, and once or twice I answered her so much at random that she looked very much surprised, and asked if I was ill.

"I am not quite well," I responded. "I was up with a parishioner most of last night, and I am a little weary."

She left me soon after, with many regrets and much sympathy, and I was free to read the note my darling had sent me.



“Dear Father,” it commenced, “Arthur does not like me to receive presents from any man but himself, he says, and I know you will think I ought to follow his wishes. So I send you back the lovely gift you gave me yesterday, and shall remember you always as

“Yours very affectionately,

“DOROTHY PERSEUS.”

For some time I hesitated as to what I should do with my rejected present, but at last I tied the ribbons together around my neck, and slipped the cross underneath my cassock. It was a sacred emblem, and even if I should die suddenly would not create surprise if discovered. I could not throw it away when she had once been pleased with it, and this disposal seemed at once the simplest and best.

The note I read several times, seeing more of the unwritten sorrow and regret in it at each perusal; then I burned it, and watched the small flames eat it up with a breaking heart.

A few days later I read in a newspaper, sent me anonymously, that “Mrs. Albert Stonehenge, together with her niece Miss Dorothy Perseus, and the young lady’s fiancé, Mr.



Arthur Brampton, had registered at the — Hotel, Cape May, and the young lady, despite her acknowledged engagement, was receiving much attention.”

So he had lost no time in having her advertised as his own. Well, perhaps it was best. At all events, I had nothing to do with her now. The time had come for fighting the demon within me, and this I did most manfully.

But ever the foreshadow of defeat hung over me, and my physical strength grew so small that my parishioners began to feel anxious for my sake, and to advise change. But I would not go away. I had done them wrong enough by my carnal, worldly love. I despised the clergyman who fled to the cool country and left his flock sheperdless while he recuperated, so I resolved to spend the entire summer in the city. But I had to endure much admiration on this account, and when people said, “His soul is too large for his body,” I sickened and would fain have died. What is so hard to endure as unearned approbation? Surely some of the punishment of the orthodox hell consists in the kindly judgment of others as compared with our own



stern appraisement of ourselves. For who can judge us so harshly as our own souls?

And all that long, bitter, struggling summer, as my physical strength waned, my soul grew, and ever I dreamed, until I hardly knew which was my real life, that of night or day. Sometimes I would not go to bed for nights at a time, hoping to conquer the dreams which pursued me, but in vain. Dreams of that far-off other life recurred, yet still I knew not the meaning of them, and added to these were wondrous dreams in the which I followed Dorothy and watched her life as spectators at a theater watch the movements and listen to the speeches of the actors.

But of these dreams I could remember nothing when I awoke, while the dreams of that other time were always distinct and clear.

And this was one of them.



## CHAPTER X

### A DREAM OF A GIRL'S DESPAIR.

THE harvesting was over in the land of Samaria, the grain all safely put away with prayers and songs of thanksgiving and gladness, the rejoicing-feast eaten.

In the harvest fields, still rough with stubble, the gleaners were gathering their sheaves together; in the pastures nearest the house of the maiden whom the Israelite had beguiled, the people were gaily dancing to the music of harps and timbrels; and far down near the brook the Israelite and the maiden walked once more together.

For a short space they had joined in the dance apart, then the maiden had gently seized the hand of the Israelite, as she passed him by in the circling merriment, and drawn him away from the others until they had passed from sight.

His arm was not thrown around her waist



now, nor did her head rest on his shoulder, but she bent toward him supplicatingly, and he held sternly back. Ever and anon she laid a soft, deprecating hand upon his arm, but with a quick, impatient movement he shook it off, and at last, when her patience was well nigh spent, she stood still and faced him.

"And art thou not going to speak to me?" she cried, with tears in the voice he still loved so well, although, after the manner of men, he cared less now that she had given him the love he sought in such generous measure. "Hast thou nothing to say to me, now that I have stolen away from the dancers to be with thee?"

Her glance was hot with wrath, but her lips were quivering as she thus spake to him, but his anger melted not, and he gazed at her sullenly.

"Nothing but to remind thee that I am about to depart, and go to mine own country," he answered, avoiding her beseeching look, "and I did not ask thee to steal away with me. Thou ledst me rather."

Now the heart of the Israelite was torn with sorrow at the thought of to-morrow's parting, therefore spake he after this fashion, but the



maiden knew not that he also suffered, and her wrath was kindled until it blazed hotly against him.

"Thou art a dog," she said, "to speak thus to me who have given up so much for thy love. And think not to escape scatheless; *thy* God may be a God of cruelty to deliver thine enemies into thy hand and make it no sin to hurt a maiden, but *my* God is a God of justice, and surely he will punish thee for thy wrongdoing to me."

"Didst thou bring me here to thus entreat me evilly?" was the question of the Israelite, as he turned from her ardent looks. "Didst thou think to make my heart sink within me? The men of Israel do not quail before a maid."

"Nay, thou art right," she answered bitterly, although the tears were once more dropping from her eyes, "they wrong them rather, and afterward escape safely to their own country and leave the maiden to bear the punishment of their sins alone."

Her voice died away in weeping, and the Israelite drew near to her once more.

"Nay, but maiden," he whispered in tones like unto the summer wind which swept the vines in the vineyard, "nay, but beloved, let



us not thus speak evilly to one another, when on the morrow I must depart. What didst thou bring me here for?"

"I bring thee here!" was the damsel's scornful reply. "How long is it, verily, since thou didst entice me to come here with thee? I brought thee here because I thought thee a man, and not a cowardly dog. I did not dream that thou couldst mean that which thou didst tell me here but yesternight; I thought that surely thou hadst repented, and didst think to take me away with thee. Therefore I desired to plan the manner of our going."

Her tones were tremulous again, and her great eyes alight with love, yet did he not relent, but answered sternly: "Did I not tell thee that it can never be? And thinkest thou me a child that I should eat my own words? Verily on the morrow we part, and even now I will bid thee farewell," and he made as though he would bow before her in token of parting.

But she would not let him leave her thus, and she constrained him to remain.

"Stay yet a little, my beloved," she murmured, with her arms wound round his neck, and her perfumed head on his breast, "stay



yet a little, for when thou shalt leave me I shall die. Yea, I must, for if I kill not myself or die of grief, then shall I be stoned so soon as my sin is discovered and there is none to shelter me. Stay yet a little, and let me live!"

Now the Israelite was yet more troubled at these tidings, although he believed them not, and he did but speak the more sternly.

"Nay, verily," he thundered, "this is not so. Thou wilt not be stoned; it is only in Israel that such things as this come to pass." Yet even as he spake he knew that in Ishmael also were such things spoken of.

Therefore he continued, tearing her arms apart, though she still clung to him (for he said in his heart, "If I go not away at once, verily she will bewitch me with her tears, and I shall stay in her land forever"): "It shall not be, I tell thee. There is thine old lover; tell him thy sorrow and he will shield thee, even though he knoweth of the wrong that we have done."

"And thinkest thou that I could do thus basely?" said the maiden, clasping him still the closer. "How could I live with him when my heart was following thee?"

Then was the Israelite beside himself, for



he felt his strength leaving him and feared that she would force him to yield, and his voice was as bitter herbs as he said to the maiden, "And hast thou no pride that thou thus constrainest me? Where is the pride of thy maidenhood?"

And the damsel answered, with a storm of weeping, "Thou knowest where my pride is. Thou *shouldst* know, for thou hast killed both my maidenhood and my pride, and verily I have nothing left but love of thee."

And again she wept upon his bosom. Then would he fain have cast her from him in wrath, only she held him with the firmness of despair.

"Leave go thy hold of me," he cried, hot with anger. "Verily I would not marry thee now if thou wert indeed of mine own kindred. For thou hast killed my care for thee with thy constant tears and weeping, and I love thee no more."

Then did the arms of the maiden fall loose from his neck, and her body sank to the ground. She knew not that he spake without truth and merely to be rid of her, and her heart was broken.

And seeing her thus white and still, the



Israelite repented him of the words that he had spoken to her, and he knelt by her side and would have wakened her with kisses and tender words. But the youth to whom she was betrothed had watched them long, and seeing her fall had rushed down the hill like a spirit of the wind until he stood by her side.

"Touch her not!" he shouted as the Israelite, unseeing of all but her, bent over her quiet form. "Touch her not or I will kill thee. Thou art too base and unclean to touch so pure a thing."

And the wrath of the Israelite was kindled against the youth and he spake hotly to him:

"Yea, verily is she pure," he taunted, in tones of bitter malice, "only,—in Israel we stone such purity."

Then the youth confronted him with the mien of a warrior, and the jealous anger of a lover:

"Were it not for her I would strike thee dead," he said, low and sternly, "for I have gone armed, lo! these many weeks, fearing thou wouldst harm her thus, as witness this sword; but she loves thee, and I could not harm that which she held dear. Think not that



I have not known mine own wrong or her shame, but I love her, and I will see her well entreated of thee. For thou alone art to blame, and shall she suffer alone? And if, on the morrow, thou dost not espouse her, and take her away with thee, then will I kill thee, and afterward she shall die by my sword. It will be far kinder than the stones of the multitude."

And picking up the form of the maiden, he kissed her face reverently, and bore her up the hill to the house of her father. And his face was white with anger, and sad with the pain of love.

"The maiden has swooned in the dancing," he told her mother, who came hurrying to meet him and took his burden from him, "and I bore her to thee."

"It is well," was the answer of the maiden's mother, but her heart was heavy within her, and her spirit mistrusted evil.

"Go thou back to the dance," she told the youth, "and I will care for thy betrothed." Yet was her gaze keen as she looked upon him.

But the youth had turned away, and when he answered it was in this wise:



“Nay, I will not go back to the dancers, but to my sheep, which have need of my care.”

And he departed, and when he had reached the hill he wept sore for the maiden's grief and his own sorrow.

And down in the pasture the Israelite wept too, yet repented he not of his mind to depart on the morrow alone.

For he moaned and said, “How could I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my father's house?”

And the stars looked down upon him as he mourned bitterly, but there was none to comfort him, for who can comfort an unrepented sin? And not even God himself can undo or obviate the consequences of a wrong action, or stay its results.

And it came to pass that one night, as I slept the light, restless sleep of utter exhaustion in my hard, straight-backed, cushionless study chair, after a night spent in useless, wakeful sorrow, and a day of hard laboring with an impenitent dying man, I dreamed still another dream and this was the dream which troubled me.



## CHAPTER XI.

### A DREAM OF A MODERN WOOING.

THE ball-room was crowded with the heterogeneous throng which is always in evidence at American watering-places, characteristic of them, and not a single type of all those so familiar to summer travelers was missing. There was the purse-proud parvenu by the dozen; the fading woman, stout, blonde, and loaded with diamonds in scores; enough old maids who would still have called themselves young to have formed the nucleus of a colony if taken together with the immaculate, blasé, faultlessly-attired, slightly bald bachelors of no uncertain age who fluttered around the younger girls; gay society dames in any given quantity; plenty of the wall-flowers, young and old, who invariably sit around the sides of a dancing room, looking unutterably sad and wistful, and flaunting their misery to the world



and the scornful eyes of the belles and their attendant beaux; grave, clerical-looking men who evidently regarded the dance as an indecent exhibition to be made use of as an example in next winter's revival, but who yet devoured the spectacle with eager, longing, pleasure-hungry eyes; stately ladies of a generation ago, kept perennially young by the gay spirit which animated them; stout, portly, elderly fathers of families, out of their element and ill at ease; graceful, slender young men who loved athletics and would have loved dancing but for the restraint and heat of evening attire; happy young triumphers over society who had nearly all the men collected round their chairs, they being too wise in their day and generation to grow red and heated with indulging in the pastime which could be enjoyed to the full in winter; shy, young, half-grown girls who gazed enviously upon these wonderful beings, and wandered about, in and out of the rooms and on the verandas, in bands, their hands clasped and their thin, frail arms swinging; and a few of the pretty, innocent-looking, fresh beauties who are the pride of all true Americans, found wherever they may be,



Among these latter was Dorothy, and that she was enjoying herself no one who saw her could doubt. She had danced every number with perfect grace and a zest which made even the wall-flowers watch her with kindly interest and forget for a moment their own hard lot (and hard indeed is the lot of a wall-flower, especially if she be young and there is no explainable reason for her neglected condition) in her evident gladness, while the belles looked at her as though suspicious of her success, and she was still fresh and pale. Oh, happy girl who keeps pale in a ball-room! Dorothy was one of the few girls whom nature favors with a complexion which is delicately colored at all times, but which attains the tint and shade of a lily in undue warmth or weariness or exertion, and amid the heated, flushed faces around her she looked like a white, snowy flower.

Her dress, which was of a white, thin material, made just low enough to show the rounded, dainty throat and the tips of the dimpled shoulders, and with huge, diaphanous puffs through which the round, slender, dimpled arms gleamed whitely, forming the sleeves; the waist, lovely in its girlish, un-



formed, uncorseted slenderness and roundness, defined by a broad sash, heightened this effect. As she swayed and whirled in the enthusiasm of dancing she might have been a lily or narcissus plucked from some old-fashioned garden, and transformed into a living, breathing creature, half woman, half child, with the gracious beauty of the one, the innocent shyness of the other.

Dorothy had, of course, learned to dance at school, and to dance as only schoolgirls, restricted to few pleasures, *can* dance, and as she had not yet been "brought out," this was her first sweet glimpse of the world's gayety. Her lover had insisted that she should be treated henceforth as a woman grown and freed from all restraint, and had himself seconded her desire, slightly frowned upon by Mrs. Stonehenge, to attend this, the first "hop" which she had ever seen.

For the first half-hour Arthur Brampton had heartily enjoyed watching Dorothy and noticing the admiration she excited, but after a little, when she joyously told him that her card was filled down to the very last extra, and he realized that his name was only written on it once, his pleasure had faded in a great



degree. He was no more selfish, perhaps, than other men, but it is a little hard to see one's sweetheart dancing with a dozen other partners, while one's own self is left out in the cold.

So, when at last his turn drew near, he suggested that they adjourn to the veranda, thinking to keep her there until several dances had passed, but she would not consent. Dorothy, woman-like, had had her first taste of the power which young loveliness brings, and she was enjoying it to the full. The cup was very sweet, and she wanted to drink a little longer.

"No," she said, with a pretty, mutinous pout, an expression of coquetry which he had never seen her wear before, "I don't want to go out on the veranda yet. It's so lovely to dance, and just see all the numbers I have on my card."

"But, dear," he remonstrated, a trifle hurt by this, her first mutiny against his will, "But, dear, you are so pale, I know you must be tired, and see, there is auntie beckoning to us."

"You go to her then," she laughed, slipping into the arms of her next partner, who came



just then to claim her, and she was gone before he could speak again.

"She will be spoiled if this thing goes on," he told Mrs. Stonehenge petulantly; "those fools will turn her pretty little head completely."

"Oh, no, I think not," was her cheerful answer. "Dorothy is good and sweet at heart, and she is so happy in her engagement, dear little soul. I have never loved her so much as I do now."

"That's very easy to explain," laughed the young man, confidently and affectionately, "since she is engaged to me," and he smiled in the whole-hearted, happy way peculiar to a healthy young man.

"Well, perhaps there is something in that," was Mrs. Stonehenge's reply, "but, joking apart, Arthur, you ought not to grudge the dear child her pleasure. I always think that a man who marries a *very* young girl ought to be especially careful of her in all ways, since she is so unsophisticated. Now Dorothy has known practically no one but yourself, and this is her first gayety. Don't grudge it to her, because you have worn out the sensation long ago."



"Oh, I don't, auntie," he responded earnestly, "I want her to be happy, but just see those idiots now," pointing to where Dorothy stood, surrounded by a group of laughing men who were endeavoring to persuade her to divide some of her dances, "just look at them. What girl's vanity could stand that sort of thing and not grow abnormally?"

"Dorothy can stand it," said his listener, calmly, "she has found her soul, you know; and, my dear, before judging those gentlemen too strictly for their very evident admiration of your sweetheart, think of how you would have acted in their place. How would you like never to have met her until now?"

"That's so, auntie," was the satisfied rejoinder, and Mrs. Stonehenge, happy in having satisfied his vanity, smiled to herself, and beckoned Arthur's stepfather to her.

He came, looking decidedly bored, for to a sober, middle-aged, scientific man a hotel ball-room is undoubtedly dreary, and she whisperingly instructed him to fetch Dorothy to her. His effort was unsuccessful for, the girl had already flown off again when he reached the spot where she had been standing, but he brought his wife, and in talking to



her Mrs. Stonehenge forgot Dorothy for a time.

Not so Arthur. He fretted and fidgeted until his mother inquired what ailed him, then rising abruptly, he went and leaned against the door, watching the pretty, slight form and the dainty feet which belonged to him, trip and flutter around, to the guidance and in the arms of others. He had wicked thoughts of round dancing just then, but they vanished when he saw a butterfly youth escort his lady-love to his mother's care, and leave her with a bow. He started toward the group quickly, and arrived just in time to hear his mother tell the girl that he was jealous, and to receive her surprised, innocent glance.

"Why?" she asked, seriously, looking up at him with her large, lovely eyes. "What have I done to make him angry with me?" and her childish, full lower lip quivered like that of a hurt baby.

"There, there, nothing at all," was Mrs. Prescott's laughing answer. "Run away with him, child, and act like a woman."

The girl looked from her to Mrs. Stonehenge inquiringly, but meeting a reassuring glance from the latter, she turned to Arthur and walked away with him.



"How I do love that child!" said Mrs. Prescott as she went, "and yet she makes me feel so curiously old. My emotional nature is as young as hers, but my heart and face have grown old alike. Have they not, my dear?" lifting her head to her husband, standing, sentinel-like, behind her chair.

"Neither, I think, my dear," he returned gallantly, "but a girl so fresh as Dorothy makes us all seem old. Your boy could not have a sweeter wife."

"I think so, too," she said softly, following the girl with tender eyes, but she sighed nevertheless; a sigh for her own lost youth. Frivolity oftentimes hides a sad soul, and youth, with all its foolishness, is very dear to a woman, especially when it begins to slip away and leave a strange desolation behind.

"She is a dear child," she said to Mrs. Stonehenge, "and you are happy in this match, I know."

"Indeed, yes," was the answer, "it will be the very thing for both of them, and Dorothy is sweeter for it already."

Yes, Dorothy was the sweeter, for she was happier, and happiness is sweetness, goodness, all the world over. "Be good and you



will be happy," says the old proverb, but it were truer if it read, "Be happy and you will be good," for do not our best impulses come when we are in the floodtide of a great joy?

As for Dorothy, she felt, as she crossed the ball-room leaning on her lover's arm, that life held no sweeter thing than this.

"Let us dance our waltz," she said with a pretty air of yielding to his unspoken wish, "and then go out on the balcony."

The music commenced as she spoke, a glorious waltz, with a swinging, slow rhythm, a sweet, dreamy melody, and the undertone of sadness which belongs to a perfect waltz measure, and he extended his arms.

Like a bird she fluttered to them, laid her small white hand on his arm and floated off, their steps in perfect unison.

"If it is true that harmony of soul produces harmony of step, we must be perfectly attuned," said Arthur, smiling down upon her upturned face, as they swam lightly on, and she dreamily answered, "Yes." She was too wrapped up in the enthusiasm of the moment, too completely thrilled with the bliss of rhythmical movement, to care for words, and indeed it was no wonder, so well did she



dance. People looked at them with admiration as they swayed and circled, and they were intoxicated with the spell of each other. Waltzing is indeed dangerous, my righteous friends, if the participants are not love-proof, but who can measure its joys to pure natures?

The music ceased abruptly, and they went out onto the broad, cool, moonlit veranda, her hand still on his arm, his head bent low to hers.

"Dear," he began, when they had paced up and down the long porch several times, and turned at last into a secluded corner where no others were likely to intrude upon their happiness and quiet, "Dear, how much do you love me?"

She looked up at him dreamily from her low seat, and a long shaft of moonlight fell across her forehead like a silver beam of glory as she raised her graceful, girlish head, with the upturned chin which was so characteristic of her, to his face, bent down so lovingly.

"How much do I love you?" she repeated, after a moment's silence. "Dear, I love you more than I can express."

"Enough to give up something you liked to please me?" he queried again, and the



glow of a perfect love, the love which weighs all the world as nothing in the balance with its own self, glorified her as she answered, "There is nothing—I think—that I would not yield for you."

"You only *think*?" he said, a little jealously. "Who is it you are not sure about?"

"It isn't any 'who,'" she answered, smiling nervously, "it's—it's—I don't want to say what. Auntie would know what I meant," and she looked at him appealingly, and blushed exquisitely.

The blush charmed away his budding jealousy, and filled his heart with a burning fire of passion, so that his voice trembled and his own swiftly rising color flamed back in answer to hers, but all the same he was not quite easy in mind as he gently told her, "I will not ask you to tell me, dear, I will not seek to know until you are ready to tell me. If the confidence between us is not so perfect as I deemed it, I will wait until it is."

"It isn't a secret," she hastily responded, slipping her warm, soft hand into his, "it's something everybody who knows me knows of, and I'm sure you'll know if you think."

"Very well, dear," he said, so tenderly that



she blushed again in the moonlight, "Very well, dear, I must try to think."

But at heart he knew; he knew that it was of her religion that the child spoke, and the glimpse she had given him of how much it meant to her made him resolve to begin the work of undoing her faith as speedily as possible. Mrs. Stonehenge had begged him not to do this, but for once he had been deaf to her entreaties.

"It's no use, auntie," he had told her that very morning, "you might as well ask me to see a slave in chains and not try to set him free. Dorothy is a slave to her religion, and I can't and won't see her sweet life spoiled and bound by such trammels if I can help it. Why, that was one of the reasons why I wanted her to come away from Chicago so quickly; that priest had altogether too much influence over her."

"Why," exclaimed Mrs. Stonehenge, taking up the cudgels in defense of her friend, "Father Bertram is a good man, Arthur, as I well know, and his influence would only be for good, I am positive."

"That may or may not be true, auntie," the determined young man had answered; "from



the opposite points of the compass from which you and I look at such matters they wear a very different aspect, and at all events I mean no man to influence my wife but myself. And if I am free I want Dorothy to share my freedom."

"But, my boy," the other remonstrated, "we will let the question of 'freedom' pass for the present, together with all questions of right and wrong in the matter, and come to the consideration of happiness. Do you think that your dear little sweetheart could be happy with the cold abstractions which satisfy you? Women are not like men, dear, and religion is necessary to them."

"Then I will love her so tenderly that love shall be her religion," he answered triumphantly, strong in the conviction that his love would be sufficient for the woman whom he should honor with it, "and I will have no separation between us, nothing, not even a shadow to mar our perfect unison, and if she continued to believe in religion and I did not we should be separated continually. It shall never be, auntie, if I can prevent it," and with a loving kiss, and a confident smile, he closed the conversation by strolling away.



Mrs. Stonehenge was troubled, but she did not believe that Dorothy would yield, and she dismissed the matter from her mind with the determination to warn the girl beforehand.

Arthur read this intention in her look, and resolved to begin the battle himself, but he was not troubled in the slightest degree; he was so sure of victory.

All this recurred to his mind as he sat by the girl's side with her sweet presence so near that her breath fluttered against his cheek now and then, and the perfume of her dainty hair, piled high on the top of the small, girlish, queenly head, came to him with every turn of her throat, and with a sudden resolve he bent to her ear.

"Little girl," he said softly, taking both her hands in his (oh, power of the human Will transmitted through the human hand, how marvelous art thou! Hypnotism thou art surely, yet more powerful still; nay, thou art soul magic, white or black according to the currents which control thee), "Little girl, you say you would give up everything for me, you *think*; oh, darling, don't you *know*?"

Faintly hurt by the echo of her own tones and modulations in his repeated words, "I



think," she turned in her low seat to face him, and lifting her passionate eyes, dim with the tears which, had she but known it, were shed for the defeat, the subjugation of her soul to his, she whispered, "Dear, I *do* know; I would give up all the world and more if I had it, for you."

"Even your religion?" he said, holding down with a firm grasp the tide of swelling triumph which rose up within him, and she answered, with a world of love and passionate renunciation in her tremulous voice:

"Yes, even my very soul!"

"Thank you, my darling," he murmured, quivering with the sense of mastery which lies at the bottom of every man's heart, be he savage or cultured gentleman, and only waits for opportunity in order to spring forth like a destroying fiend, and he bent down and kissed her red, sweet lips until she cried out for mercy.

Then he gently clasped her in his arms, drawing her head close against his breast, and thus they sat, lost to time, to everything but their love and the dim, vague delight of the music which swelled out from the house behind them with just the passionate, rhythmic



sadness inseparable from perfect orchestral waltz music, until she suddenly sprang to her feet with a startled cry.

"What is it, darling?" he questioned, frightened himself by her evident terror. "What scared you, sweetheart?"

The people from the ball-room came running out, and she hastily, shamefacedly explained that she had thought a face had looked over the rail close to her own.

"Somebody who wanted to watch the dancing, and jumped down again when they found they could see nothing," was the general verdict, but when they were alone again Arthur asked, tenderly, "What was it really, dear? What did you see, or think you saw?" For a little she hesitated, unwilling to tell him, but at last she whisperingly said that she had seen Father Bertram's face gazing sadly into her own.

"Oh, hang Father Bertram!" was her lover's response, all his vague jealousy and distrust of his unacknowledged rival returning. "You're always thinking of him, that's what's the matter. It's a pity you must fancy you see him when we are so happy."

"But I *did* see him," she sobbed, utterly



upset by the phantom face, and his harshness, "and he looked so sadly and reproachfully at me. What do you think it was, Arthur?" and she shivered uncontrollably.

"I think it was your own nervousness, dear," he answered, his wrath quelled by her tears, "and that you were thinking of him."

"But I wasn't," she said, shivering again, but he made no answer save to wrap her fleecy white shawl more closely about her, and to suggest, gently lifting her to her feet, that they walk about until she was warm again.

"Or shall we go in and dance?" he asked her, but she quickly responded, "No, I'd rather stay out here and be quiet."

"All right," he said, drawing her arm more tightly through his own and caressing it with his unoccupied hand, "All right, we'll stay here, and talk of cheerful things."

Under his tender care she gradually recovered from her unreasonable fright, but she still remained firmly convinced that she had really seen the face of her friend, and she was glad to turn from the recollection to a more pleasant subject—themselves.

Presently, when she had ceased to tremble and could even smile, Arthur began upon an-



other topic which he specially desired to discuss.

"Little girl," he began, "now you have given up so much for me" (Dorothy started. Had she given up? she had thought the matter but an imaginary one), "I wonder if you would be willing to forego something else you like."

She looked at him confidingly, but did not speak, so he went on:

"I mean, dear, whether you would be willing to leave this gay place and go to some quiet country farm and spend the rest of the summer, just by ourselves."

"I'd rather," she said, with a radiant smile, and he responded briskly, "Then we'll go tomorrow. The other people are all tired of this place, I know, and are only waiting for us to give the sign. But I thought," with a swift glance at her down-bent head and half-averted face, "that perhaps as you were receiving so much admiration you would want to stay on indefinitely."

"Oh no," she whispered back, "I only care for your admiration, you know; and now, I shall never be happy here again."

An impatient retort of "still thinking of



that fancy" rose to his lips, but he repressed it, and merely remarked that she seemed very tired and had better go to bed.

"Yes," she murmuringly said, "I'm so tired, dear, and I don't want to go through that room," indicating the ball-room, "again. Find auntie and bring her out here."

He complied, and soon appeared not only accompanied by Mrs. Stonehenge, but also by his mother and her husband.

"What is the matter with you, little girl?" inquired the latter, who had a very genuine fondness for Dorothy, "you look as if you had seen a ghost."

"So she thinks she has," her lover answered for her, the satire in his tones only half hidden by his open laughter, "and the sight has upset her sadly."

Mr. Prescott looked from one to the other of the lovers keenly, suspecting a quarrel, but his wife spoke sharply to her son.

"I hope you haven't been scolding her on account of her natural enjoyment of the dancing and her partners," she said in a stern undertone, and Arthur answered quickly and indignantly, "No, indeed, mother, it's that confounded face she fancied she saw that has made her look so white."



Mrs. Prescott was not convinced, but she turned to Dorothy, who was trying to talk brightly to Mrs. Stonehenge, and said, affectionately, "Let me go upstairs with you, dearie."

Dorothy assented gratefully, and they disappeared up the stairway together. At the turn of the stairs they stopped, and Dorothy threw a loving look back at Arthur, who watched her solicitously from below, but even then her face was so sad that the other two watchers started and looked at each other anxiously.

"I wonder if that young rogue has really been scolding her; she's entirely too good for him," said Mr. Prescott, who was the very opposite, the antipodes, of his stepson's light, happy, pleasure-loving, thoughtless nature, and had but little sympathy with him, his character possessing a little of the hardness which belongs to strong, firm, faithful souls; and Mrs. Stonehenge shook her head silently. She suspected the truth, and was sorry for both, thinking, as she did, that Arthur was bound to be defeated.

"Poor children," she said softly, and all the evening and far into the sleepless night



Dorothy's sad face haunted her with its vague alarm and distress.

Poor Dorothy! No wonder she was sad at heart. She had parted with the thing for which women long so deeply, so seldom attain in its fullness and part with so lightly, at the request of love or ambition, the glorious boon of Liberty. .

Now the night upon which I dreamed this dream I suffered a moment of the severest agony in the brief time in which my face looked upon Dorothy, but in the morning I remembered nothing of the pain which had troubled me all night. Only,—the next day I awoke with a haunting sense of loss and sadness, such as often comes to men when they awake after a night of supposed dreams in which they have lived through many experiences the memory of which has passed from them, and I carried that feeling of desolation about with me all day. Besides, the dream-life was slowly stealing from me all the vitality I possessed, and my body ached with the fierce strain of that moment during which the soul had left it to appear to my other soul, my life, my love,—Dorothy.



But that night I dreamed another dream, a dream of ancient Assyria, and this was the dream which came to me as I lay upon my bed.



## CHAPTER XII.

### A DREAM OF THE SLAYING OF THE YOUTH.

THE dawn was just creeping rosily over the topmost summit of the hill on which the youth who was betrothed to the maiden watched his sheep, and the birds in the vineyard were faintly calling to each other. The drops of dew still sparkled on the grass-blades and the harvest-stubble, and the sheep still slept. Down in the valley no creature was astir save the Israelite, who was making ready to depart, but on the hill the youth watched sleeplessly. All night he had watched thus, and now, when he saw the Israelite leading his beast to the stream to drink, he made haste to pass down the hill and stand at the casement of the maiden.

“Awake, awake, beloved, and let me into thy chamber,” he called softly to her, and she heard him and came running to the casement.



"Surely I did think—" she began, but he interrupted her.

"I know," he said, with the accent and speech of a man wounded in battle, "thou didst think it was thy lover, the Israelite. Behold, even now he makes ready to depart to his own land and leave thee behind."

Now the maiden, when she heard him speak thus, grew white and faint and she clung to the casement as though she would have fallen, and the youth, reaching his hand to her, did hold her up, and she clung to him as he said:

"Let me come into thy chamber, beloved, and help thee make ready to stay him. Or if I may not enter, do thou make haste to meet me at the door, else will he go without thee."

And the maiden did as he had said and came, creeping, to the door, and the youth grasping her hand to stay her, did say:

"Beloved, take heart. He shall not leave thee behind, else will I kill him. I will care for thine honor. Only trust thyself to me, and compel thy limbs to carry thee, so that thou goest not to him leaning on my arm."

And the maiden, her tears flowing, did say to the youth, "Ah, would to God I had



loved thee, had been true to thee as thou hast been to me! But now am I undone."

And the face of the youth was like that of an angel, and his voice like the sound of gently flowing streams, as he made answer.

"Do not grieve, beloved," he whispered softly, so that the Israelite, returning, might not hear, "do not grieve for that which is past and which was not ordained of God. Surely thou art scarcely to blame," and with many such words did he comfort her.

But the maiden still wept, and she said to him sorrowfully, "And wilt thou forgive me this wrong which I have done thee?" and her tears fell like rain.

But the youth, albeit his heart was wrung within him, made answer after this wise:

"Beloved," were his tender words, "for all the wrong which thou hast done to me I do forgive thee freely, and I love thee more than I did in the days of my happiness in our betrothal. And for this reason will I see that the cowardly dog of an Israelite shall not leave thee to mourn. Lo! he returns, and thinks not to find thee here. Go thou to him now, and constrain him once more to take thee with him, and if he will not, then will I come to thine aid."



And the maiden did as he had said and went forth to meet the Israelite. Now the Israelite had thought to depart unknown while the family still slept, and he started when the maiden did stand before him, yet spake he no word, only he lifted his sacks of grain to the back of the beast.

And when he would himself have mounted, the maiden did seize his hand, and she wept as she said, "And will my lord indeed depart thus, and leave his beloved behind? Nay, my lord, take me with thee, else wilt thou deliver me to death," and his hand was wet with her tears.

Now the heart of the Israelite was sore troubled within him, yet repented he not of his evil mind, but spake sternly to the maiden, saying:

"And canst thou, a maiden, thus constrain me? Get thee back to thy father's house, and trouble me no more. Is not our friendship over?" and his face was like iron.

Now the youth, hearing him speak thus, grew very wroth, and his hand closed upon the handle of the sword he had girded upon his side, yet he moved not, for he thought that the maiden would overcome the Israelite and compel him to entreat her rightlly.



And the maiden, lifting her sad face to the Israelite, made answer: "And speakest thou of friendship to me? Oh, my beloved, my beloved, my heart is breaking. I cannot live without thee," and again her hand clung to the edge of his robe. But he shook it off and leaped into the saddle, saying, "Surely thou must indeed live without me, for even now I depart, and thou wilt see me no more," and he made as though he would spur the beast.

But the maiden, flinging herself on her knees beside the beast, clung to his stirrup and wept aloud, beseeching him not to leave her, and he spurned her with his foot, and spurred the beast, leaving her to lie hopeless in the dust.

And at this and the bitter cry which broke from her, the youth sprang from the shelter of the doorway and caught the bridle of the Israelite, saying, "Come back, thou dog of an Israelite, come back to the damsel whom thou hast wounded even unto death."

Now the Israelite was exceeding wroth, yet he spake no word, for the face of the youth was that of an avenging God, and the Israelite feared him; yet tugged he at the



bridle rein, and would have departed, but that the youth held firm.

Then the Israelite asked of him, and said: "What hast thou to do with this quarrel? Surely thou dost love the maiden, and I leave her in good hands; thou wilt save her from death and shame." But he was pale with terror, and the youth was like a mighty warrior.

Then the youth turned to the maiden, who still lay where the Israelite had spurned her, and lifting her with one hand, he said, "Beloved, choose thou between this man and me. Which of us twain wilt thou have for thine husband?"

And the maiden, weeping still and bitterly, made answer, "I love the Israelite."

"Then shall he marry thee," was the brave speech of the youth. "I would have wedded thee with gladness, even as thou art, but thou hast chosen, and thy choice is good. He shall marry thee to-day, and take thee to his own country."

But the Israelite made answer, fiercely: "I will *not* marry the maiden. How could I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my father's house? Truly I will not marry her."



"Then shalt thou die," was the swift answer of the youth; "verily, if thou weddest not this maiden I will kill thee. Shalt thou indeed go scatheless to thine own country, and, taking her heart with thee, leave her body behind? Verily shalt thou marry her, else will I kill thee," and he drew his sword.

But the Israelite answered angrily, "I war not with striplings," and when the youth, in his hot anger, would have struck him, he drew his own sword also and pierced him through the heart so that he gave an exceeding bitter cry and fell lifeless to the ground, with his blood staining the white robe of the maiden, and his dead face turned up to the cloudless heavens.

And the maiden fell on her knees beside him as he lay there wrapped in the dignity and silence of death, and her heart was sore for her old playmate, and the youth to whom she had been betrothed. And as she knelt, trying to stanch the blood pouring from his wounded heart with the long sleeves of her robe, so that her white arms were colored with his blood, she remembered his love and his faithfulness, and she wept again.

"Oh, thou Great Heart," she moaned



“would God I had died in thy place, thou noble soul! Would God I had loved thee more!”

And laying her head, with only her long, waving hair for covering, on his bleeding breast, she pressed his stone-cold hands between her own, and wept as those who sorrow without hope.

“I shall never see thee more,” was the voice of her mourning, “and thou hast died for me,” and thus she lay and sorrowed while the sun rose slowly over the purple edge of the mountains and the sheep on the hill behind began to bleat for want of their accustomed care.

And thus she lay when her father, wakened by the tumult and her weeping, came out to see who had given utterance to that exceeding bitter cry.

And as he carried her to her mother, he asked sternly, “Who has done this thing? Who has slain thine well-beloved?” And when she made answer, weeping sore, “It is the Israelite,” he cursed him, and the maiden swooned. But she told them not when she was revived again that she loved the Israelite, and they knew it not for many days.



And when she slept on her mother's breast, her father stole softly out again, taking care not to waken her, and the youth still lay there with his accusing face appealing to the God in whom he had trusted, but the Israelite had fled, and was far on the way to his own country.

Now this dream troubled me sorely, but I mourned neither for the maiden nor the youth to whom she was betrothed so much as for the Israelite; yet I knew not that I myself, Father Bertram, had, in those far-away days, been the Israelite, and that my tenderness for him was but the tenderness which a man feels for his own soul. Now I know, and I pity myself no more, but in those days,—ah, I was sad and sorry both for the man I was then, and also for the man I had been, not knowing that he was a previous incarnation of my own soul.

And in my life-dream I sorrowed much about this time, and grew very weak because of the constant efforts made by my soul to protect itself and appear again to Dorothy. But I never succeeded in making her see me again, save once only, although I was near her constantly.



But there are none so blind as those who do not wish to see, and even if she had not tried, as I now know she did, to shut me from her thoughts, to close her mind against me, and keep out all recollections of my personality, she would have been unable to see me, being dominated by the will of another, antagonistic to myself, and guarded, prisoned by the walls of Love.

Love is a mighty power, and sometimes it quickens the soul-sight wonderfully. But no great vision, no spiritual insight ever came to the spirit which is wrapped in the dulling folds of a merely mortal love. And albeit Dorothy loved that other dearly now, in this one little life-dream, he was not her soul-completion, for I was the other half of her sweet soul.

Still in dreams I watched her every movement, loved, sorrowed, joyed with her, and although my suffering was as that of a wounded soldier dying of thirst within hearing and sight of a cool, sweet stream, by night, yet mercifully I knew nothing of it by day. Else my grief would have been more than I could bear, for I was fighting a desperate, manful, losing battle with myself, and all the time I



had a bitter, dim consciousness that my labor was in vain.

Yet, much as the dreams pained me, sad as was the sense of desolation they left with me each morning, greatly as it added to my already hard burden, I longed for them, and they always came.

And this was one of the most bitter which I dreamed, and which was preserved in the astral light for my future reading.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### A DREAM OF THE BREAKING OF THE FAITH.

THE day following the dance the party of which Dorothy formed, perhaps, the central figure, journeyed away to a farm far in the depths of the country, and hardly had they settled here, happy in their sylvan seclusion, before Arthur began the work he hoped to accomplish in the breaking up of Dorothy's faith in the religion to which she held so strong a love. To begin with, he made love to her so sweetly that her worshiping tenderness for him grew stronger than all the powers of her own nature combined, precisely as a graft set in a tree will frequently draw to itself all the vitality of the original growth and in a short time reduce the old tree to a bent, gnarled, twisted caricature of what it formerly was, and although the tree of Dorothy's character grew daily more fair to look upon, more sweet to taste, it still was a graft,



albeit flavored and colored and shaped by her own innate goodness. People who are much together grow alike, "drink into each other's spirits," as the old North-country saying is, and with newly-engaged couples this is often extremely noticeable.

With Dorothy the king could do no wrong; Arthur's very faults were glorified into virtues in her eyes, and as a child easily adapts itself to circumstances disliked at first, so Dorothy, forgetting herself entirely, believed things right merely because her lover told her so.

"For of such is the kingdom of heaven." Where is such meekness to be found as in one whom Love is teaching the greatest of lessons? Humility, thy name is Love; and Love, thou art verily Humility.

In this state of mind for the ardent young man to impress his own individual opinions upon the plastic mind of the loving girl was an easy matter, and so evident was her deference to him that the older people smiled regretfully as they watched it.

"It's a pity about that little girl," said Mrs. Prescott one day, as she watched the young people strolling up and down in the shady, cool, green-roofed orchard, the girl's face



turned up to that of her companion with an air of confidence and admiration pretty to see, but boding ill for her future independence; "she's making trouble for herself," and in her concern for Dorothy's future, she moved so energetically that the hammock in which her beautiful figure reposed lazily swung with unwonted speed, and the pillow behind her head fell to the ground. Her husband rescued it with the calmness and easy speed of a man who has become used to watching for the opportunity to perform such acts of affectionate attention, and she continued, after a smile of thanks:

"Yes, it's a great pity one can't warn her not to show her love for that boy of mine so openly, because she's so innocent she wouldn't understand, but it's a cruel pity that she will do it."

"Why," asked Mrs. Stonehenge, who was calmly swaying back and forth in the big colonial rocker on the "front stoop" which was the pride of their hostess, "Why shouldn't she show that she loves him?"

In her heart she understood and sympathized with the drift of her friend's speech, and the thought which lay behind it, but she



did not wish, in her loyal affection for the son of her adoption, to admit as much to his mother.

"Why?" rejoined the latter, sitting up so energetically that the pillow again lay in the dust, and was again restored to its place by her lover of twenty years' married standing, "Why? Because a slave shouldn't forge his own chains. That boy kissing Dorothy there is a tyrant, like his mother," with a laughing glance in the direction of her husband, "and he's got the natural tyranny of mankind in addition. Now I don't believe in the new woman and all that rubbish, but I do like to see a woman with a will of her own. How much say do you suppose that dear little child is going to have in the disposal of her future life? She's the mental slave of Arthur now, and she'll be his slave bodily before a year has passed. And when the glamour of the honeymoon is over he'll be over his attack of love-fever too, and Dorothy will have to face the life-long disappointment of finding how far the ideal is from the real."

Her eyes were flashing, her cheeks glowing, and she looked so young and charming that her husband stifled a sigh for his own disappointment, and inquired, with a patient



look, "Has marriage been so bitter to you, my dear?"

"No," she answered, flashing a look of real love to him, "it hasn't been so bitter to me, dear, but it has to you. The disappointment has been on your side, because you were the member of the firm who worshiped an ideal. You know that every day since we got married you have grieved in secret because I was not, am not, and can never be, the woman you dreamed I was. Now, own up honestly, isn't it so?"

Her husband smiled quietly. He was sure of her tolerant affection if not love, and his love for her was as warm and strong as ever. Some natures grow and feed upon disappointments, just as others become sour in the process.

"I don't see the use of discussing such questions," he said slowly, with a gentle touch upon her hand, which lay on the hammock-rope nearest to him. "I knew an elderly man once who had married a young wife, and afterwards she made a slave of him, and exhibited his degradation to all their world.

"We fellows used to remonstrate with him sometimes, and tell him to resist her and be



a man again, but he never took our advice. When we would make remarks of this kind, which, being young and foolishly sympathetic, we did with a frequency as irritating as it was in bad taste, he always answered: 'It's too late in the day, youngsters; when old fools marry young wives they must take the consequences.' I can see his ruminative smile now.

"Now I say, too, 'When would-be philosophers marry beautiful butterflies they also must take the consequences.' We have had a pretty good time of it together, on the whole, my dear, and, to quote my old friend again, 'it's too late in the day to talk of disappointment.' We love each other still, I think."

"Of course we do," was Mrs. Prescott's quick answer, returning the pressure of his hand, "but that doesn't alter the question we were discussing. Each of us has kept our own personality intact, but it isn't always so. Now I'm going to quote a friend too. I knew a girl once who married a man who loved her as much as she did him, which is saying a great deal, but he always insisted upon having his own way, and she always yielded, until she had lost the power to do anything else.



"After she married I lost sight of her for some time, but one night at a reception she came up to me, and called me by my maiden name.

"‘You are Marian Strong,’ she said, and after I had gazed at her for a moment I answered, ‘And you are Mrs. Langdon,—Bella Brown.’

"‘Not Bella Brown any more,’ she said with a sad smile, ‘I used to be that happy individual, but I have been Mrs. Langdon so long that there is very little of Bella Brown remaining.’

"Now she loved her husband in a quite idyllic way, and was happy in her marriage, but she couldn't help regretting her own sacrificed personality, as any woman not a fool or an idiot would. No man has a right to ask or think of requiring such a sacrifice, and no woman should yield it for the sake of the rest of her sex."

She stopped suddenly, as Dorothy drew near, still hanging confidently on her lover's arm, and caught her breath sharply, and as the sweethearts wandered off again, her husband asked her, half jokingly, "Why so excited, my dear, and what effect does the



subjugation of a single woman have upon the rest of her sex?"

"The same effect that the single woman has who wears slaughtered birds or buys at bargain counters or church bazaars the articles which have cheated some other woman out of the work, or money, or food she needs," she rejoined, earnestly. "If I didn't do it somebody else would," they say, but if every one would cease wrong or foolish doings on their own account, the world would be reformed and the millennium come.

"And I am excited because I know how Dorothy will suffer when Arthur's cooling love allows her to discover how much less true he is than herself, and compels her to mourn over the fact that she is no longer Dorothy Perseus, a free woman, but Mrs. Arthur Brampton, a legalized slave."

"Oh, come, my dear," remonstrated her husband, "not the last necessarily."

"Yes, necessarily, with a husband of Arthur's temperament," was the decided answer, "and even if she never knows of the change, the change will come, unfortunately. Many a man or woman grows to be a weaker, poorer copy of their husband or wife, who would



have been much nicer had they formed their character on the original pattern furnished by God.

"I, for one, shall watch Dorothy Perseus, sweet little girl as she is, turn to a weak replica of my son, with many a heartache. And this is what will surely happen, and so I say it's a great pity she shows her love so much, because it will facilitate the process, indefinitely."

"I don't think her love itself is a pity," said Mrs. Stonehenge, who had listened eagerly to this conversation, dropping her embroidery as she spoke; "I *can't* think such a deep affection is to be regretted."

"Oh, but it *is* a pity," broke in Mrs. Prescott, "it gives him such an advantage. His love is as moonshine unto sunlight, and as water unto wine, compared to hers, and instinctively he knows it, and it will help him to enslave her. A woman who loves is utterly defenseless anyway, and when she loves as Dorothy does she might as well lay down her arms at once, before the battle begins. But it's a cruel, heart-breaking pity just the same."

"Love is *never* a pity, my dear," said Mr. Prescott, earnestly; "it more than pays for



the suffering it causes in the refinement and tenderness it gives to the character. And now, my 'legalized slave,'" with a tender, laughing glance, and gently laying her unresisting form back upon the hammock pillow again, "let us drop the subject, and go for a row upon the 'crik,' to use the parlance of the natives."

Mrs. Prescott acquiesced, but she wore the look of a person who is still convinced of the truth of a cherished opinion, and she cast a pitying, regretful look at Dorothy as she passed her, a look which the happy girl found it impossible to understand. But Mrs. Stonehenge understood it, and she too looked a little sad as she watched the joyous pair. Dorothy had behaved to her with such sweet tenderness of late, since the one great love had paved the way for all others, that she had crept into the heart of the older lady, in a strange, incomprehensible fashion, and her heart was heavy as she realized what was the subject of the earnest, absorbing conversation between the two she loved so dearly.

Meanwhile, down in the cool shade of the trees branching overhead, Arthur had gradually brought the subject round to religion,



then taken the breath away from the child who loved him so entirely by telling her that he not only believed in no recognized religion, but that he was an atheist, a term which, to his unsophisticated sweetheart, was more dreadful than that of "murderer." Only for a brief space, however, for she speedily reflected that since Arthur could not do wrong, (Oh, foolish, unanswerable, faulty logic of Love!) it could not be wrong to think and talk in a way which had hitherto seemed to her the depths of the blackness of utter perdition.

"Don't you believe in God?" she asked at length, when she had recovered from the first shock of surprise, and he boldly counter-questioned, "What is God? Define your idea of him, or," with a faint sneer, "it."

She was silent, hardly knowing how, on the spur of the moment, to do that which has baffled the deepest thinkers, reasoners and controversialists of the world, and he, thinking her half convinced, continued proudly:

"You can't do it, darling; nobody can. The ideas and mental images men have formed of the Deity are as diversified as the men themselves, and colored by personal and



national temperament, as witness the lovely Gods of the ancient beauty-loving Greeks, and the mud idols of the South Sea Islanders. But never a man has defined God in plain, understandable terms, and no one ever will. For you cannot describe that of which you have no clear mental conception.

“Most people think of God as a larger man, but such a view is absurd, for God is supposed to be infinitely superior to man, and even a wicked man would not be guilty of the things commonly attributed to God. Humanity shrinks from the cruelty, the injustice, the hard-heartedness which allows or institutes the things which religionists tell us are caused by ‘the will of God.’ If the will of God is what it is said to be, then it is a wicked will, not deserving of respect and slavish obedience, much less of admiration and veneration. And if the things said of God are untrue, and he is possessed of the powers and might credited to him, why does he not set the matter right? As it is, he stands before thinking minds convicted not only of inconsistency, but of cruelty beyond that of any man who ever lived.

“What man, for instance, would think for an



instant of punishing weak, helpless little children for what their parents had done? and no man, however cruel, would demand the sacrifices which God is supposed to do every day. So we see that God can not be a person, and if not a person, what is he?"

"I do not know," she answered dreamily; "who does know?" He smiled triumphantly, and asked, "Do you think God is a law?" "Yes," she said softly, "I think he is a law."

Again he smiled and said, with the ring of coming victory in his voice, "Then the law must be blind, for how else could such irregularities occur? Law gives all a chance, that is, a sensible, useful law does, but what chance do the majority of mankind have? Many are hopelessly handicapped before they are born at all, and many more fight a useless, hopeless battle against fate all their lives long and die at last in despair. What law save that of selfish ignorance could produce such effects as these?" He ceased and looked at her as though the matter was ended, but she said again, more softly than before, "All the same I think God is a Law."

"Then why do you pray to a thing which



you have owned to be unchangeable?" he asked with a quiet smile. "For law cannot change to suit the individual wants of any one person. And yet you believers make long prayers in which you tell the Being you worship just what he ought to do under the particular circumstances which trouble you, you ask him for a number of things you do not want and could not use if you had them, you confess and bewail sins you mean to commit again, and you always end by saying that the reason you do all these things is not because they are right and good, but simply for the sake of a man who died centuries ago, and who never claimed to possess the powers you attribute to him. Now I call such behavior cowardly and childish; I had rather go through life as best I can, and bear whatever comes to me like a man, than ask help from something I can neither understand nor revere, and which I never think about save when I am in trouble, which is what the majority of people do, in regard to their religion. And when I must meet the mystery called death, I mean to do so bravely, with the calm belief that it is just as natural as birth, and as painless. According to my way of thinking, only



a weak coward will believe in prayer or practice it."

"Well, I may be a coward," she rejoined, a little indignantly, "but I do believe in prayer, and I know that God is not the thing you describe."

"Then what is he?" he asked. "If he is not a person, not a law, not a nonentity, what is he or it?"

She hesitated for a moment, not having his gift of fluent speech, but after a little she said triumphantly, as the memory of a long-gone-by Sunday-school lesson recurred to her, "God is a Spirit."

"What is a spirit?" he asked again, and again she was at a loss for an answer. "Do you mean the popular conception of a spirit," he continued, "which is a ghost, a wraith, or do you attach some deeper meaning to the word?"

He saw that he had cornered her, and as she remained silent, he smiled and said again, "Can you define spirit, or do you give the matter up?"

"Oh, I give up," she answered, with a burst of genuine annoyance. "I can't argue as you can, and it isn't necessary to define God in order to know that he exists,"



Delighted that at last she had come to the very point he wished her to reach, he laughed; she flashed a curious glance of mingled anger and admiration at him, and he answered it as follows: "Ah! but how do you know that he does exist? What proof have you of the truth of such a theory? Have you ever seen him? Then how do you know that there is a God at all?"

He was watching her closely, and he was a little disconcerted by the horrified gaze she turned upon him. She had understood that he was an atheist, had pityingly conceded that he *must* be right. But she had never fully realized what the word meant until now, when confronted with the hardness of its meaning.

"No God at all!" she exclaimed. "Why, how could the world exist without some moving power controlling it?"

"Well, can you prove it?" he asked, seeing her evident distress, and desirous of convincing her once for all, but she was stung to anger now, and she answered hastily: "Can I prove that I am alive? Then how do you know I am? How do you know that this fern," touching a graceful frond of maiden-hair which grew by her side, "is not a



tree or a raspberry-bush? How do you know that that flower over there is growing? Did you ever see a flower grow?" And shocked and startled, she would talk of the subject no more.

For the remainder of the day she was a little distant, and the afternoon did not pass as pleasantly as usual, but next morning he began again, a little more carefully, and before the week ended she brought the matter up herself.

"Arthur," she said timidly, "I'd rather believe in God than not."

"Well, please yourself, of course," he answered, smiling; "it is a harmless belief in the abstract, and if it comforts you to hold on to it, do so by all means, but allowing that there is a God, do you think that he is just? Why, if he is all-wise and powerful and good, does he always put the wrong people in the wrong places? Why does he let cruelty and tyranny reign supreme, and evil prevail over good? Why do such women as auntie long for children on which to expend their affections, while babies by the hundred are murdered every year? Why is the world so easy a place for strong men and



wicked women, while little innocent children, dumb beasts, and innocent, good girls, suffer the tortures of the lost and there is none to help them. Don't talk to me of God," he continued, getting excited with his subject, for, to do him justice, he really believed what he said, and firmly imagined that by thus breaking down her faith he was doing her a service. "Don't talk to me of God. The devil is more real than he, and he is only a myth created by men's imagination, a bugbear wherewith to scare those timid souls who, in consequence, live the life of a toad under a harrow. God, according to his own followers and believers, is responsible for so much of wrong and cruelty that the mere mention of his name makes my blood boil."

"But, Arthur," she began again timidly, "you forget all about Jesus Christ. You know he instituted the gospel of love."

"No, I don't forget, little girl," he told her rather patronizingly, "but he brought the world nothing new, nothing which had not been taught for centuries before. Now don't mistake my position, dear heart," seeing that her eyes were dim with tears, and that her lips were quivering; "I have the greatest



respect and admiration for the life and doctrines and character of the Nazarene called Jesus. He lived as nearly a Godlike life as possible, and he died for his principle. I fully admit that if every one would follow the rules he laid down, the world would be far sweeter to live in, but who does? 'Love your enemies,' he told his disciples, and all the religious bodies war with one another. 'Blessed are the meek,' and who so proud as many church members? 'Blessed are the poor,' and the churches are decked with silver and gold, while the poor whom the Christ recommended to the loving care of his followers in words which, for beauty and tenderness, have never been surpassed, starve in the streets in the winter. Talk of Jesus Christ! I fancy that if he should come down to earth to-day his noble heart would break with disappointment, and a priest of to-day must either be a hypocrite or break his heart likewise, to see the sin and sorrow of the world and his own inability to better it. Who is Christlike nowadays?"

"But, dear," she murmured, loath to be defeated, yet feeling the ground slipping from beneath her feet slowly, while she vainly



caught at straws to stay the mighty current of his overmastering will, "if you admire Christ as you say, you must believe in him."

"Not as a Savior, darling," he answered, smiling at her innocence of distinctions, "merely as a good man. Believe me, little girl, no power in all the created or uncreated universe can save us from destruction but our own selves. The Ego, the God within us, is that to which we must look for salvation, if salvation there be, and it is needed, and no one, Christ or heathen, can save a man from the consequences of a sin or a mistake."

She made no answer, but he responded to her incredulous look by saying: "Why, even the religionists know this. 'God forgives sins,' they say; yes, but if a man commits murder God does not prevent him from being hung if he is caught, and if a man gets drunk God will not keep him from the headache which will follow next morning. Let your idol go, my sweetheart; love is a better God than that of the churches."

And thus he talked and argued, day after day, backing up his opinions with the compelling magic of love, enforcing belief in them by tender caresses, and day after day she



listened, while he went on hashing and rehashing the worn, threadbare old arguments wherewith men have "disquieted themselves in vain" ever since the beginning of time. And all his arguments, all his ideas, all his theories seemed new and forceful to the unsophisticated girl who, while yet she could not believe this new gospel with the soul and spirit portion of her organism, yet yielded her mentality to the cold philosophy which nevertheless repelled her so unpleasantly.

And so it came to pass that one day Mrs. Stonehenge, coming upon them as they sat together in the rustic arbor Arthur had made for their private use by bending down the bough of an immense tree and nailing a roughly constructed plank seat underneath it, found Dorothy gazing out at the sunset with a pale face, and solemn eyes filled with a strange, new sadness.

Instinctively she realized that something had happened, and sitting down by the girl, she asked gently, "What is the matter, my dear?"

Dorothy made no attempt at explanation or apology; she simply remarked, "I'm not a Christian now, auntie," and turned her gaze back to the sky.



"Oh, my dear!" exclaimed the older woman sadly, "how sorry I am! For once I can't rejoice in your victory. Arthur, I think that you have done very wrong in spoiling this child's faith. Sometime she'll be very sorry that she listened to you."

"I think not, auntie," was the triumphant answer, "I can only rejoice that my dear little girl has come out of the shadow of superstition into the full light of truth."

"But atheism is not truth, Arthur," answered Mrs. Stonehenge. "It's a cold, chilly, awful mistake, and it's so utterly hopeless and joyless besides."

Dorothy said nothing, only continued to look far away with the expression of one who sees dim, sad things in the distance, and she turned to her.

"You don't seem to feel very glad about it, girlie," she said, and the child answered, "I don't feel glad at all, auntie; I'm very sorry. But Arthur says that Christianity is out of date nowadays."

"It isn't, child, it isn't," ejaculated Mrs. Stonehenge. "Believe me, it's the truth which the world hungers for and rejects," but the girl answered nothing, and after a little she passed on.



A new, indefinable expression of sadness came to Dorothy that day, and it lingered always after; she had lifted the curtain of cold doubt which surrounds the world, and peered into the gray, colorless interior. What wonder that some of the icy mist wrapped her henceforth? What wonder that the sad sights of humanity depressed her, uncheered as they were by the hope of a better time coming? What wonder that, having bartered the sweetest hope of humanity for a cold abstraction, she found that not even the force of a mighty love could give her back her old gladness in all its fullness of perfect measure?

And seeing this, Arthur was robbed of the perfect joy he had looked to experience in this conquest over Dorothy's faith, and the warning words of Mrs. Stonehenge recurred to him again and again.

"She'll be very sorry sometime, she'll be very sorry sometime," rang in his brain day after day, and troubled him a little. Would little Dorothy indeed be sorry sometime that she had listened to him? "She shall not," he told himself, "I will make her as firm as I am," and to this end he lost no opportunity of making her old religion ridiculous in her sight.



With this idea he one day, hearing of a Methodist camp meeting a few miles distant, and knowing how grotesque were their proceedings as a rule, resolved to take her to see it. So he suggested a drive far out in the country for that especial day, not mentioning the camp meeting, and Dorothy willingly acquiesced. But he little thought of how his weakness and the need of mankind for something higher than itself to call upon in times of need was to be shown him, or he would never have started out upon that eventful morning.

Now this dream made me very sad at night, was bitter as gall to my soul, yet in the morning I remembered it not, neither did I understand that the youth who had broken down the faith I had labored so hard to build was but repaying me for the sharper pang I had given him in ages ago, although I wondered what I had dreamed that my cheeks were wet with tears, and my heart aching when I awoke.

But that same night, as it drew near to the dawn, I dreamed another dream, a dream of Assyria and the fair, sweet maiden I had



once loved, before her fair soul was wrapped in the personality of Dorothy Perseus,—and this was the dream I dreamed.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### A DREAM OF THE DEATH OF THE MAIDEN.

THE autumn was waning and the chill air of winter touching the air with frost when the maiden fell sick, and lay nigh unto death. Her mother watched over her, cradling her in her arms just as she had done when the maiden had been as small as the babe so closely clasped in her arms, and her father mourned sore by her side. But the maiden herself was calm with the stillness of those who have gone far down into the Dark Valley and discovered the gates of that higher birth which men call Death, and her eyes rested upon her babe with the tender love of a mother, mixed with the sadness of her who is no wife.

“Weep not, my parents,” she said softly, “weep not that I shall thus escape by the help of the kind friend of all men, Death, from the consequences of my sin, and go to that higher tribunal where men are not. Surely it seems



to me that there I shall not be harshly judged for my fault; I am so weary, and my beloved has gone from my sight, so that I have not the joy of his presence now, in my time of sorrow. Verily it is hard to die and not in his arms, but is it not better for my spirit to leave me thus surrounded by thy love, than to be stoned of the multitude?"

And her voice grew faint and sank into silence, drowned by the sound of her mother's passionate weeping.

"Yea, verily is it better than that thou shouldst be stoned, oh, child of my heart," she moaned, throwing dust over her head, "but it is hard that thou shouldst suffer while thy dog of a betrayer goes free. Verily it is he that should be stoned."

"Talk not of stoning," was the shout of her father, as he beat his breast, "talk not of stoning, woman. Only keep thy spirit whole and thy breath within thee until thou canst travel, child of my soul, and we will steal away by night and go to a far land where thou shalt be called a widow, as thou art a widow indeed, in very truth, and in the love of another forget the Israelite who fled and left thee to mourn."



But the maiden answered, her voice fainter than the song of a dying bird, "I would not forget him, and I could not marry another, with the guilty secret that is in my heart, and the memory of the youth to whom I was betrothed ever rising up between us. My soul still clings to that of the Israelite, and though I should wander long on the banks of the Shadowy River, yet will I wait until he comes to me, and give him this child which is his and mine. For I do love him."

Then the father of the maiden cursed the soul of the Israelite, and said, "Verily thou art no daughter of mine to be still dreaming of him who has brought thee to sorrow, and the pride of mine house to the dust. Mine enemies do smile derisively at me, and I am as naught when I sit in the gate. And I am no longer lawgiver because of thee. Yet all this is as nothing if only thou wilt keep thy spirit within thee, thou light of my eyes, and the child of mine old age."

But the maiden answered not his speech nor regarded the weeping of the mother who bore her, and the babe at her breast wept aloud and she hushed it not.

"My child is dead," moaned the mother,



who had thought this best but a little space before, "my child is dead and I shall never see her sweet smile more."

"Verily we have not seen it since the Israelite fled," the father of the maiden made answer, "for the light of her eyes went with him. If she would have taken heart we might have left the country privily and pitched our tents far away, but she mourned ever and would not be comforted."

And he bowed his gray head and wept.

Now the mother of the maiden was sore distressed and the crying of the babe troubled her, and with a bitter wail she lifted the child to her bosom and went on with her mourning.

"Oh, my sweet flower," was the voice of her desolation, "my mandrake, my blossoming vine, and shall I never see thy bright eyes open again, and shall I never more hear thy dear voice ringing out in the songs of our nation? I am indeed desolate, and the light of my eyes has fled. Open thou thy sweet eyes once more, my wounded dove; speak to thy mother yet another word before thou art gone forever."

And, kneeling by the couch of the maiden, she wept bitterly and would not cease to cry,



“Open thy sweet eyes, thou dear child of thy father.”

And it came to pass that as she cried the heavy lids of the maiden's eyes were slowly raised, and the wondrous eyes, filled with the light of a dawning heaven, looked at her once more, and the maiden said, “Weep not, oh, thou mother of my love. Verily my soul has traveled far, and was but hindered by thy mourning. I care not for that the Israelite did leave me desolate now; I care not that thou didst stay me from following him; I care not that I must die in this, mine early youth, for I have beheld strange things, and I know that God is good. I know also that I shall meet my love some time to come, and that his love shall be to me like the flowing of water toward the sea; and my soul is at peace.”

Now the father and mother of the maiden knew that she spake in the trance of death, so they disturbed her not, but they listened to her words with awe, for they knew well that the eyes of the dying see far into the beyond, and their hearts were uplifted by the sound of her voice.

And the maiden spake yet again, and said:



"It matters not though men shall die, they shall be born again; it matters not that men shall weep, they shall rejoice anew; it matters not that women shall suffer in subjection, for the time cometh when they shall reign in glory. The time shall come, and I shall be there to see, when women shall arise as one, and claim that which is theirs of God and man, and shall receive it, and I shall be rewarded then for mine agony now. But oh, my beloved," and her voice was bitter with pain, "oh, my beloved, but thou must suffer in that time, and I must bring thee to thy sorrow. Yet in still farther time we shall again be glad, and in that day thou wilt not leave me to bear my sorrow and shame alone. *For the day of the Woman is coming!*" And she finished with a shout like that of a warrior glad with triumph.

Now the maiden's eyes were closed and her voice silent once more, and her father and mother did think her soul had left her, but yet again she spake, and said, "Give me my child." And when the child was laid in her arms, the mother-love in her spirit did wake and cry, and this was the manner of her speech:



"Oh, my baby, my darling, the soul of my soul!" she wailed, kissing the small, lovely face, which was but that of the Israelite in little, and sweetened with the wonder of babyhood. "My treasure-troth of a love that is dead and gone, would God I could take thee with me; thou art so small to live without thy mother, and who will shelter thee from the scorn of men, thou that canst never know a father, and whose mother is going from thee?" and she wept sore, and bewailed much, and would not be comforted.

"I will care for thy child," said her father; "it is mine because it is thine, and thou art mine," and her mother also said, "He shall be mine also."

But the maiden still wept, and when she felt the spirit leaving her, she said with a loud shout, "Oh, thou God of my fathers! let me take my child with me," and then in a lower tone, and with a smile of perfect joy, "It shall be even so, my parents. The child shall go with me. God be with you till our spirits meet." And with a sudden smile her spirit had gone, and the long, dark eyelashes which the Israelite had so often praised hid the glory of her eyes.



And her father and mother cried aloud for grief and fell upon her dead breast, weeping and mourning sore, and when they lifted them up the babe was very still. And when they looked to hear him cry, lo! he was also dead. For thus had God answered the prayer of the maiden, and her child went down to death with her.

And the mother of the maiden said as she made her child ready for burial, "It is well. Now she will not be lonely or afraid. She was ever afraid to go anywhere alone, and the way of death is dark and dreary, but now her child is with her she will be comforted, even as I was comforted when she came to me in my sorrow at the death of mine own mother. It is well," and her spirit was calm, although she still mourned for this, her child, dead untimely.

But the heart of the maiden's father was exceeding sad and bitter against the Israelite, and he prayed to the God he worshiped after this fashion:

"Oh, thou God whom I have trusted in, do thou avenge this child of thine who was also mine; let not the Israelite go unpunished. Be thou his enemy forever, for the sake of this cruel wrong which he has done."



And when he had prayed thus, his heart was less heavy. But he knew not if the prayer was answered, for Jehovah does not speak aloud to his children, and they do not hear when his voice is gentle.

And they buried the maiden and her child in one grave in the valley where she had so often walked with the Israelite, and the sun and moon shone sweetly and the rains fell softly upon it, and the winds blew gently over it, even as though she had been buried with the clean of name in the burying-ground of her people. For the Great Mother of the World has no jealousy, and her children are as dear to her erring as perfect, and God knows no difference in his treatment of the just and unjust. It is only men who dare to judge each other.

And the spirit of the youth to whom the maiden was betrothed, who was buried with his fathers, was as near to hers as though they were laid side by side, for there are no distinctions of space in the Kingdom of Death. And they both slept perfectly, dreamlessly, restfully, being tired with the long day of life.

And the parents of the maiden sent tidings to the Israelite of all that had come to pass.



Now this dream grieved me greatly, and almost I knew why, although my intellect did not firmly grasp the fact that as I had killed the youth directly and the maiden indirectly, so they, now in this dream of present life, would deal me my deathblow. But I grieved bitterly for the sorrow of the maiden, and the thought of her added to the many troubles which beset me so thickly that last, fateful summer; yet my dreams of Dorothy were far more bitter.

And this is one which came to me some nights later.



## CHAPTER XV.

### A DREAM OF AN OVER-FILLED DAY.

THE day on which Dorothy and her lover were to visit the camp meeting came on apace, and with it, or rather on the day before it, came a telegram which summoned Arthur back to the city. He was very loath to leave Dorothy, more unwilling still to give up his cherished idea of remaining away from Chicago until a day or so before the wedding, but the case offered to him was so important and promised so much advantage, that, with the new thought of another's future good mixed with his own, he felt that he must return and take it up at once.

So, with a sad foreboding, born of regret, he told Dorothy that he must say good-bye for a time, and was saddened yet gratified by the tears which sprang so quickly to her lovely eyes, and the evident sorrow she felt at the thought of this, their first parting.



"Never mind, darling," he told her lovingly, "we will go off to-morrow for a long drive all to ourselves, and we won't return until after dark," but he said nothing of the camp meeting; he did not wish to argue on the very last day of their happy seclusion, and he felt sure that she would not wish to attend this form of country dissipation. So he was silent as to this part of his scheme, and enjoyed her gladness in the prospect to the full.

As it was the last day, (why does such an echo of sadness linger about every sentence which contains those little words, "the last," in its embrace?) they determined to make it a long one, so after a very early breakfast they started off, assuring the older people that they should not return before moonlight, and they held to this determination in spite of no little opposition.

"What do the proprieties matter?" Arthur asked impatiently, when his mother demurred a little at his proposal of this plan. "It is our last day and we want to enjoy it by ourselves. I shall not see Dorothy again until Christmas, you know," and with an indulgent smile Mrs. Prescott had yielded the point, consoling her



wounded sense of conventionality by reflecting that no one would know of the odd proceeding, and that after all they were engaged.

So, while the morning was still dewy, they drove away, along the fresh roads leading through green woods, and fields sweet with the scent of wild-flowers and growing grass. The sun rose slowly over the hill in the distance, and each tiny leaf and every blade of grass seemed to stand out in full relief against its perfect light, which shone as it only does while yet the day is young and Nature unjaded with the work to be done before sunset. A little bird, hidden deep down in the golden-rod, suddenly burst into song, and its joyous carol furnished the finishing touch which made the scene perfect. The hearts of the lovers were almost too full for words of that sweet joy which only nature and love can give. They were silent from sheer happiness.

Once they stopped to eat some ears of late, sweet, tender corn, and Dorothy remarked that she had lately read that baths of dew were wonderfully beautifying to the complexion, and that it would be an easy matter to take one by collecting the little pools which



lay shimmering and reflecting the sunshine of the rustling sheaves around them.

"Shall I try wetting my face in it?" she asked coquettishly, as she smilingly sunk her teeth into the soft, milky corn and looked at the sky through her long lashes. He did not answer, and she turned to see what had taken his attention from herself; he was gazing at her with an expression of perfect rapture. At times her sweet young beauty fairly enchanted him, and now he was completely fascinated by her charms, enhanced as they were by the added glory of perfect unconsciousness of them. And truly she was fair to see.

The early sunbeams shone on her curly uncovered head, lighting some of the rippling waves to bright, shimmering gold, throwing others into a soft, dusky shadow and making the tender brown skin transparently clear, while her cheeks were like wild roses, and her eyes bright as stars. Her simple gingham gown was gathered at the throat and waist, and a dainty frill of creamy lace lay against the dimpled hollows of her "kissing place," as an old beau was once wont to call the place where a woman's neck joins company with her body. Her wide-brimmed hat



swung from her slender, rounded arm, and the hands holding the corn were white and dainty, with soft, rosy palms like a baby's, and nails as faintly pink and polished as a seashell.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked with pretty imperiousness. "Didn't you hear me speak to you?"

"I was thinking how sweet you are," he answered, as he tenderly kissed her and laid his hand on the hair which he was fond of declaring was "the prettiest thing in the world." "You are entirely too good and lovely for me."

Oh, wondrous power of love! For nearly thirty years the world in general had vainly endeavored to make this self-confident young man believe that people better in all ways than himself actually existed, and now a little bit of dainty girlhood had laid his pride in the dust. Verily there is a law of compensations.

"You are the silliest boy I ever knew; you make me despise you," she said, with a loving look which belied her words. "Now you've made me waste that ear of corn."

"I'll get you some more, darling," he an-



swered; "you shall have everything you want while I live."

"Well, I want to go on now," she pouted, with a sudden change of manner, and he took her in his arms to lift her into the wagon again. As he got his lovely burden breast-high, he looked in her face, and the sweet helplessness of her expression enchanted him. A sudden sense of his power and the completeness of his sway over her swept through him, and he realized how entirely she had yielded her will and nature to his. (Ah, Dorothy, beware! It is not wise to take a master, however good and kind he be; it is not wise to voluntarily enter slavery, even though the chains are gilded with beauty and padded with love. Freedom is sweet, and there comes a time in every life when the heart cries out for its liberty as a lost child cries for home.)

As the young man looked down into the loving eyes raised so confidently to his, a swift expression of fear stole into them and the slender form in his embrace shivered as though with a sudden chill.

"Put me down," she gasped in a very horror of shuddering fear, "let me go, let me go!" but he held her fast, and resting his foot on



the wheel of the wagon and his elbows on his knee, smiled down at her in the lovingly superior manner common to lovers and husbands who know that they have conquered the personality confided to their care.

Now she began to struggle in his arms, and letting go her self-control entirely she writhed wildly and begged him to set her down. But with the innate, unconscious cruelty of superior strength, he paid no heed to her beseechings, and not comprehending how she suffered from the sudden panic of her insurgent womanhood, he only clasped her the tighter, until, with a peculiar gasping cry, she ceased to struggle and lay quite still.

It all happened so suddenly, the whole scene taking but a moment, that almost before he realized that he had conquered, she had fainted, and the victory was wrested from him.

With a swift pang of remorse, he laid her on the green grass which bordered the dull yellow road, and knelt by her side. The branching tree boughs overhead threw fantastic shadows on the still, white face as the faint, warm wind-breath stirred them, and



little glancing sunbeams ("fairies" Dorothy loved to call them) flickered over the shady pink of her gown, hid in the hollows of her throat and threw into strong relief the small motionless hands.

She lay unconscious so long that the now repentant lover was attacked with a horrible qualm of fear that he might have caused her death, and he desperately glanced around for some means of reviving her. He could hear the ripple of a creek somewhere near in the darker shades of the wood beyond the corn, but he dared not leave her to search for it, and he wildly thought of bathing her forehead with the lemonade which filled the stone jug in the back of the wagon. Before he had time to try this experiment, she opened her eyes with a faint sigh and moved slightly.

Instinctively he drew back in order that she might not see him at first, but he need not have feared, for the long curling lashes sank as suddenly as they had been lifted, and again she lay still for so long that his heart beat fearfully. Hastily he bent over her, thinking to chafe the tiny, helpless hands, which seemed to regard him with a mute reproach in every line of their dainty contour, and as he did so she opened her eyes once more.



The pale, faint color, just creeping back to her cheeks and lips, receded again as she saw his face so near her own, and with a weak, swift movement she recoiled from him, and, covering her face with her hands, began to cry in a quiet, yet bitter fashion which made him, if possible, more repentant than he had been before.

Very tenderly he tried to soothe her, to induce her to look at him, to still the tempest of weeping which shook her from head to foot, but all to no purpose. Her self-consciousness, her womanhood, the very center of her being, had received a severe shock, and the tide of insulted feeling had swelled quite beyond her control. Many a woman, like a horse, enjoys being dominated so long as she is treated with the tender respect and deference she longs for, aye, needs, but once her will is interfered with, be it ever so slightly, the entire body of her femininity is up in arms against the invader of her sacred temple.

To Dorothy this unexpected action on the part of the man who stood to her foolish soul in the place of God, was like the falling of a cherished idol, the breaking of a treasured possession, and like the true woman she was,



she felt that the world itself could not atone for this lack of chivalry in the man who had won, and hitherto held her heart. She was afflicted to desolation, and she cried so long and unrestrainedly that Arthur was thoroughly alarmed, and fairly implored her to forgive him and to try to become calm. But by this time she had wept herself hysterical and found it impossible to control herself, and not until she was completely exhausted did she cease her bitter sobbing and sink into a state of passive sorrow.

Then, and not till then, could she endure to look at him, and for some time longer the mere touch of his hand sufficed to make her shiver and to bring back the deadly pallor which had so frightened the shamefaced young man, who waited with a patience which astonished himself for her to master her suddenly assailed emotions and take up the burden of every-day life again.

At last, just as repentance was beginning to give place to a not entirely unnatural annoyance (for after all, his crime had been but venial, he thought), she looked at him with sweet eyes which had only love in their shining depths and did not repulse the hand he half timidly laid on hers.



"Have you forgiven me, darling?" he asked tenderly, with a quiver of suppressed feeling in his voice, all his remorse coming back in full force at this, the first sign of her yielding, sacrificing her anger to her love for him. "Will you let me lift you into the wagon now, so that we can go on again?" and she hesitatingly smiled assent although the trembling lips were silent. She had a strong desire to insist upon returning to the farm and the protecting care of the reasonably affectionate people there, instead of trusting herself to him again, but her pride instantly suggested that if she returned some explanation would be necessary, and what could she say?

The true reason for the shadow which had dimmed her hitherto cloudless sunshine she felt that she could not give even to tender Mrs. Prescott; the thought of one of those creations known to polite society as "fibs," "prevarications," or "white lies," never occurred to her truthful soul, so she took the only alternative open to her and consented to resume that interrupted journey. But when Arthur would have taken her into his arms again she would by no means permit him to do so, and assayed to climb up into the high



seat unaided. But she was weak with the physical and mental tumult, and as she wavered on the step she seemed so totally unable to go farther that he sprang upon the wheel and lifted her to the body of the wagon.

She shivered as his hands touched hers, and looked at him with an expression similar to that in the eyes of a timid animal which fears its owner, and that look was a severe punishment to the man who had so frightened her. The cruelty of his conduct was more apparent to him than it had been before, and he experienced one of those brief flashes of self-knowledge which are so bitterly keen and true and unflattering.

In these moments of spiritual insight we see ourselves, not "as others see us," but in the far more unkindly light of our own shamed and repentant soul-judgment, and in the perfect, merciless glare of this psychical search-light, which floods every nook and cranny of our being, and shows forth all the hidden, often unsuspected motives which prompt the actions which we fondly imagine to spring from purely accidental causes, we learn how, underneath the personality we know as a general thing, there lies another as antipodal as



the two poles of a hemisphere. Happy, or rather unhappy, but fortunate, is the soul which thus looks its inner self in the face most frequently, for no man can do this and remain conceited, egotistical or vain; yet—the nature which in this way uncovers the shame of its existence, and lays bare too frequently the blots which mar its natural purity, may perchance suffer keenly from undue exposure to the biting blasts of its own withering criticism.

But the humiliation of Arthur Brampton was not yet complete, for ere he could release his unwilling burden she had been again overpowered by the memory of the horror which had oppressed her so short a time before, and—fainted again. This time unconsciousness did not come quite so quickly, and the poor girl had plenty of time in which to suffer the horrible dizziness and nausea which all who have fainted know so well, and dread so much. After the awful shudder which warned her that her nervous system had not entirely recovered from the shock it had undergone, she was conscious of a horrible sickness, followed by a rhythmical pounding in her temples; then her heart rose up into her throat,



her tongue sank down to meet it, something in the back of her head gave way suddenly, and with a hasty fear that she was dying she relapsed into unconsciousness again.

Once more Arthur's heart failed him, but this time he made no effort to move her into a recumbent position or in any way hasten her awakening. He simply drew the drooping head to his shoulder, and supporting her with his arm, gazed at her with a sad sense of having lost something which he had loved and cherished. He was inclined to smile contemptuously at his own weakness, to assure himself that this feeling was but the reflex action of an excited mind, but if he had only known it he had indeed lost something which he could never entirely regain in its pristine perfection of freshness,—the pure trust and confidence of a soul which would never again rejoice in such absolute faith in human nature,—the unfaltering faith of a girl's innocent heart.

After Dorothy opened her eyes again, she lay quite still with her head against his arm and her warm, fluttering breath coming and going on his neck and face, and though she knew that his arm was around her, she made



no attempt to withdraw from his embrace; she did not stop to analyze or formulate her train of thought, but she instinctively realized that it was too late to struggle against the will of the man to whom she had given her all so easily and gladly, and like the wise captive, who, knowing that escape is impossible and all hope of freedom vain, makes the best of imprisonment and learns to love his jailer, she, in that simple act of allowing herself to remain passively in the embrace of his supporting arm, renounced the liberty she had so gloried in and—became a slave. Love is but a jailer, albeit a gracious one as far as womankind is concerned, yet every new prisoner he makes rejoices in being conquered, and many yield up the most precious attribute a soul can own, willingly, aye, gladly, and without striking a single blow in self-defense. It is said that caged wild-birds grow to love their prison, and many a petted canary would refuse its liberty if this was offered it, and upon being forced out into the wide, sweet world, would find it large and dreary, and pine for the small, safe cage where food abounded without the troublesome necessity of seeking it, and where life had a sweet monotony.



The heart of the vanquished maiden, subjugated to the desire of her lover as completely as though with the more primitive club-and-carry-off method of countries which have not yet reached a high state of civilization, gave a few wild, longing throbs after the lost joy so recklessly thrown away, so carelessly bartered for the new, sweet grandeur of that which all women at heart, if not in speech, consider as the best which the world holds, then the tumultuously pulsating thing had learned the first lesson in the long course which is necessary to produce that rarity, a model wife,—utter, loving submission,—and was still. With a confiding smile, Dorothy laid down the arms of her womanly independence, trampled on it, and deliberately chose love before anything and everything else; deliberately, yet helplessly, since to a tender nature, once intoxicated with the wine of the gods, the stimulant is absolutely necessary for life, of any quality worth calling by that name at all. And both the participants in this struggle understood the unspoken meaning, the deep significance of this act of self-abnegation, and as one heart yielded the reins the other seized them, and the conquered one took up the parable of speech.



"I'm better now," she whispered, pressing her cheek against his rough coat-sleeve as though seeking to mortify the tender flesh, and he looked radiantly down at her, pleased with the result of his hazardous, thoughtless experiment, and unselfishly glad to see her looking more natural and free from the fearful, timid expression which had made him so penitent.

The remorse was all gone now, however, banished by the first signs of a kindred feeling in her mind, and only gladness remained, mixed with a little of the joy of the victor and the pleasure of success.

"Are you more sensible, too?" he asked, with a tender smile which disarmed her faint rising of anger at having all the blame of the happening placed upon her, who had also borne all the pain and suffering. "Has my little girl got over her foolishness now?"

She hesitated an instant, then, tacitly accepting the reproach, she answered with a little smile, "Yes, dear, I'm—I'm sorry I was so—cross," (oh, foolish Dorothy, to so sell your birthright for a loving word!) "won't you," with the sweetest smile in the world, "forgive me?"



"That's my brave darling," he answered, delighted with her pretty timidity, "to own up when she was in the wrong." (Oh, sophistry of vanity! How was she wrong?) "Of course I'll forgive you; only don't scare me so again. And by the way, dear, what made you faint?"

She did not answer at first, but he looked at her with the magnetic, imperious eyes which dominated her completely, and after a momentary struggle she whispered, "I was frightened, I think; you wouldn't let me go, and it seemed, somehow, as if I should never be able to get away from you again."

"Do you want to get away from me?" he interrupted, with a quiver of hurt feeling in his voice. "I thought you loved me as I do you, and wanted to be with me all your life."

"So I do," she made haste to answer, "I love you better than everything in all the world, and if you left me I should die, for I could not live without you."

"My darling, my sweetheart, my dearest," he murmured passionately, "I could not live without you either," and somehow the sunshine grew brighter after this, and the unpleasantness of the lately-finished scene faded away. To the day of her death Dorothy could



not think of it without a shudder, but before an hour had passed she was fully convinced that she herself, and she only, was to blame for the trouble, and she tried hard to make amends for her supposed misconduct.

And in her penitence she was so sweet that Arthur was enchanted, and told himself that he loved her all the more for her little display of temper, but in reality the cause of his satisfaction lay deeper than he supposed.

Man instinctively loves to feel himself master of a being of the opposite sex, this characteristic being a relic of primitive times, no doubt; and the subjugation of a woman's soul, the conquering of her heart, and the submission of her mind to his own, is a sweet pleasure, a dear delight, all the more enjoyable if the subject resists a little at first, and has to be shown the error of her ways and brought to see matters in their true light.

So the young man was in the happiest of moods when, after a little more loving conversation, the old horse, which had taken this long rest quite philosophically, and calmly eaten all the grass within reach, was gently started on again, and the remainder of the trip was so delightful that the sad feeling of



defeat which this incident left in the mind of the girl was soon obliterated and washed out by the new tide of happiness.

Again she thrilled, soul and body, with delight in the sparkling dewdrops which still lingered on the under sides of the leaves and grasses; again she caroled a joyous response to the birds, who sang as gaily as if they, too, had just made up a lover's quarrel; again she laughed in the sunshine, which was a trifle too warm for comfort now. She experienced one of those rare periods of happiness which only come at the farther edge of a sorrow, and her whole being responded to the gladness within her, as a violin answers to the will of a master-hand. "Sweet are the joys of renunciation," sings an old poet, and a drop of water which is lost in the ocean is doubtless glad of the complete rest and self-annihilation it finds therein.

Higher and higher rose the sun as they journeyed on, and the day grew so hot that the shade of the cool woods seemed doubly grateful. Dorothy was a little pale, between the heat and the tide of emotion which had submerged her, when they neared the camp-meeting ground, and she readily acquiesced



when Arthur, innocently remarking that a revival was evidently in progress, suggested that they go in and see whether such exercises were really as amusing to witness as they were to hear about.

So they drove in through the open gates, fastened the horse in one of the long sheds arranged for the purpose, and made their way to the big tent from whence the noise proceeded. The scene which met their eyes would have been a very familiar one to many persons, but to Dorothy, used as she was to the most decorous of worship, it seemed exceedingly strange, and not a little irreverent.

At the end of the tent opposite the door, sat a row of men whom she afterwards learned were the "local preachers" from the whole country-side, and their faces were wreathed in smiles as they watched the ever-increasing crowds around the "mourners' bench," and listened to the shouts of a woman who jumped wildly about and up and down in front of them.

"You men all look so beeyootiful ter me," she screamed, "I jist loves yer when yer tells me God loves ME" (with a terrific accent on the personal pronouns), "an' I'se a-goin' ter serve him all my days," ending with a violent



crescendo. Then she dropped to the floor unconscious, while the other women crowded around her, and a tall, skinny man rose to his feet.

"I'm a-goin' ter serve the Lord, too," he growled forth in a deep bass voice, "but it tuck me a mighty long time ter make up my mind ter follow him. I jist skinted erlong day arter day, an' 'lowed thet sometime I'd git saved, but I never jined ther church till ther Lord tuck all my stock with ther bloatin'. Thet jist tuck ther pride clean outen me, an' I gin ter onct an' made my perfessin'. An' now I'm in ther bright an' shinin' light, an' I've found a friend in Jesus."

"I've found a friend, and such a friend!  
I've found a friend in Jesus."

sang the whole congregation, taking up the refrain of a popular hymn, like the chorus of a comic opera, and while all agreed upon the tune, each person sang in a different key and with the time and pitch which seemed most pleasing to his or her individual taste. The effect thus produced was as unique as it was ridiculous, and Dorothy, covering her face with her handkerchief, laughed hysterically,



until, from very exhaustion, she was compelled to sink into quietness again. Some of the women looked in her direction, evidently thinking that she was overcome by a very different emotion, and one or two made as though to speak to her, but the steadiness of Arthur's gaze was disconcerting to the shy, diffident women, and they returned to their enjoyment of the singing again. Having wailed and shouted and moaned through the song already started, some one else began "What a friend we have in Jesus!" and this, too, was finished to the very last line, with great zest and spirit. Another would have been speedily begun, but a woman in the middle of the tent got upon her feet, in the aisle, and swaying her body from side to side, began, in a kind of weird chant, with a curious rising inflection on every third or fourth syllable, "I've found a friend *too*, an' he come ter me in the, queerest *way*. I wuz a-bakin' biskits fer *supper*, an' a-thinkin' on ther things which berlong ter ther *Lord*, an' I opened ther oven door sudden *like*. An' ther he *set*, ther blessed *Savior*, on top uv er *biskit*. An' I fell on my knees an' *prayed*, an' here I *am*, ter praise his blessed *name* ferevermore."



"Blessed be the name, blessed be the name,  
Blessed be the name of the Lord,"

took up the chorus, and this, too, was repeated again and again.

Then a young boy left the grinning, gaping, joking crowd on the last seat, and pranced down the aisle, with his naturally ruddy face white and set, and his eyes gleaming wildly. Facing the audience, he tried to speak, but burst into tears instead and was in an instant the center of a crowd of people, all singing, praying and shouting, and presently it was announced that "another precious soul had been saved from the devil and given to the Lord." A storm of "Hallelujahs" followed, and in the excitement which ensued the converts were numerous.

The last to march up to the "penitent row" was a man who was evidently much respected by every one present, and an admiring hush greeted him as he bowed to the preachers and began to speak.

"I'm free ter confess," he said in a voice which was husky with suppressed emotion, "thet I'm a gret sinner, an' I'm bound ter say, too, thet it takes more currage ter say so then it did ter face ther cannons et Gettysburg. But it's true, brethren, it's moughty



true, an' it's time I owned up ter it, I'm a gret sinner. I jined ther church years ago, an' I've never missed a gatherin' uv ther Lord's people since, an' I've taken moughty good care ter bring my chillun up in ther nurtur-an'-'dmonition uv ther Lord. Why, even jist this yere mornin' I licked thet boy uv mine right smart because he wanted ter go fishin' 'stid uv comin' ter ther Mercy-seat wuth his par an' mar. But since I've set here ter-day, an' listened to ther testimonies uv ther brethren an' sistern, it's been powerful borne in upon my soul thet wuth all my prayin' an' exhortin' I've never give enough fer ther spread uv ther cospel among the poor benighted heathen. I never wuz one ter procrastinate when onct my duty wuz clear ter me, an' I'm a-goin' hum right now ter sell a steer, an' I'm a-comin' back ter-night wuth ther money."

With an effort at the dignity which he felt appropriate to the occasion, he strode down the aisle and from the tent, and before the excitement caused by his speech had died away a negro woman arose and pushed her way to the front. She was known to most of the people as a "regular backslider" who was



converted every year, only to fall from grace just as regularly, but she always gave "good testimony," and was considered an acquisition to any meeting.

"Bless the Lawd, honey," she commenced, addressing the preacher nearest her end of the line, "I'm yere agin, an' I'm er-goin' ter stay this time. Oh, you younguns needenter laff, you rascals (turning to the giggling, choking group in the rear of the tent), you needenter laff at poor ol' Brack Sally, fer if my face is blackern yourn the Lawd made it, an' them what the devil made can't mend it nohow; an' ye ain't such a gran' sight bettern I am. An' you people (to the congregation) needenter think I'm a-goin' ter backslid ergin, cause I ain't never no more ferever-an'-ever-bless-ther-Lawd-Amen. I'm a-goin' ter git in ther gospel chariot fer good this yere time, an' I won't fall out ergin. I've gin up dancing, I've gin up swearin', an' I'm ergoin' ter dress like a Shaker on meetin'-day."

With a dramatic gesture she tore the scarlet ribbon from her gaudy, blue-and-yellow trimmed hat, snatched off the green sash which encircled the place where her waist



ought to have been, and throwing herself on her knees, began to wail in the manner peculiar to the African race, when wrought up over anything. A young girl followed her example, and soon the entire feminine part of the assembly were shedding tears, praying and groaning.

In the midst of the uproar, a little, insignificant-looking man, known far and wide as a "powerful exhorter," stepped to the front, and clearing his throat began to speak in a voice which seemed to proceed from his prodigious shoes. "I've bin a wanderer all my life," he drawled, "but I'm a-comin' hum now, an' brethren, we're all goin' ther same way, ther whole bilin' uv us,—"

"We're goin' home, we're goin' home, we're goin' home to-morrer," struck in a shrill voice from the other side of the tent, and many of the people joined in the refrain with all the strength of their lungs. The man who had been intending to make a long speech, annoyed at the interruption, but determined not to be outdone, began to sing "Pull for the Shore" lustily, and as his immediate family and intimate friends all shouted heartily in company with him, there were soon two sep-



arate choirs, each trying to drown the other. Directly a third faction began another strain, and the noise, when added to the cries of "Hallelujah." "God help us!" "Lord save us!" "Oh, Jesus, come down!" and so forth, from the newly-converted saints on the front seat, became terrific.

Dorothy, whose excitable temperament was easily upset, began to cry, and but for Arthur's prompt interposition, she would soon have been up in "the mourners' row." But he was determined that she should not "make a fool of herself" in this manner, and taking her, almost by main force, from the little crowd of eager women surrounding her, he half led, half carried her into the outer air, where by dint of a drink of cool water, and much tender talking, he succeeded in soothing her.

"You would soon have been as crazy as the rest, if I hadn't rescued you," he remarked as they sat down in the shade of a great tree, and to his surprise she began to cry again, and exclaimed: "I wish I was; they're happier than I am."

For a moment he was too hurt and indignant to speak, but as soon as he had recovered



his temper somewhat, he recollected that she was undoubtedly nervous and completely overwrought; so, suggesting, a little coldly, that they had better return home, he went to fetch the horse.

But to his astonishment, when he returned she declared her intention of remaining to witness the "baptizin'" which one of the preachers had announced to take place in the afternoon, and from this determination he could not move her. He was not a little surprised, for she was in general so easy to persuade that he had no knowledge of the little vein of obstinacy which ran through her character and made her so provokingly persevering at times, and his astonishment grew as he found that she was immovable in her decision. Again his temper surged up, for he was little used to opposition, and she was as a rule the most submissive of subjects, but he managed to control it, and silently biting his lips to keep back the angry words which rose to them, he turned away.

By the time he had fed the horse, she was ready and willing to make up, and her advances toward this end were so sweet that he was soon as much in love as ever, and quite



forgetful of the lecture he had intended to deliver as soon as she was calm. But she was still anxious to see the immersion, so after all the dinners had been eaten (this part of the "meetin'" being turned into a regular picnic affair), they fell into line behind the long procession of "spring wagons," buggies and farmers' turn-outs of all kinds, and drove to the nearest creek.

Here the preachers stood waist deep in the stream, and the converts waded out to them in a long line. As they reached the "gospel peddlers" as Arthur contemptuously called the ministers, each one laid his left hand on the chest of the "saved" person nearest him, and the other between the shoulders of the person to be baptized. Then, slowly lowering the convert into the water, he held him or her there while making a short prayer, and finally brought him to the surface again, and raised him to an upright position, choking, gasping and spluttering, but with a beatified face, and (doubtless) a happy heart.

All the "full members" of the neighborhood stood in a crowd on the bank, and each one, "brother or sister," was compelled to shake hands so much and so vigorously that the



danger of taking cold while listening to the lengthy prayers and thanksgivings which followed the ceremony was greatly obviated.

When the last subject, a slender, pretty girl in a clinging white frock which seemed rather to gain than lose purity from contact with the muddy water, came dripping up the steep, slippery bank, Dorothy sighed so deeply and sadly that her lover tenderly asked what troubled her.

"I wish I was a Christian again," she murmured, and he remarked a little crossly, "Well, for pity's sake go back to your old bondage if you want to do so."

"I couldn't now," she answered mournfully, but he made no response, and they were very silent until Dorothy suddenly said that she was very thirsty. Arthur seized upon her wish for a drink with avidity, welcoming it as an opportunity to beguile her away from the camp meeting, and together they crossed a field of tall wheat which grew high above the girl's head, and climbed the steep hill which lay behind the creek. On the top of the hill a farm-house stood, but between the field and the house another creek ran, and the only way in which to reach the other side



was by means of a "timber" or tree-trunk, simply hewed down and thrown across the stream from either side of the high banks which lay nearly fifty feet above the water.

Now both the lovers had heard ghastly stories of a certain "nine-mile crick" which was possessed of an undercurrent so deep and strong that any one falling in would never reach the surface until the river, miles farther down the country, was reached, and, although neither thought of this now, it made Arthur hesitate for a few moments before deciding that Dorothy must not cross this particular creek. The timber was so far above the water, and she was not blessed with that wonder of phraseology, a "steady head;" so he resolved not to run any risks. She might faint and fall so suddenly as to overthrow both, or she might simply slip off and be drowned.

So, bidding her stay where she was, he hastily started back, but something in his tone made her anxious to show him that she could cross the timber alone, and she determined to do so, and meet him as he returned, on the other side of the creek, thus proving conclusively her ability to cross unassisted. Had



he told her to remain where she was with a different manner she would have done so without a thought, but his slightly dictatorial accent had roused the spirit of opposition which lies at the bottom of every womanly heart, and she was bound to disobey him. Many women like being ordered about, as long as the commander has the good sense to utterly abrogate any show of power, but let the mandate go forth with the least assumption of unwarranted authority, and they rebel instantly.

So Dorothy's womanhood compelled her to attempt the dangerous task she dreaded, and with sinking courage, but unwavering will, she walked out beyond the water's edge. No sooner had she done this than she felt giddy, and the shining, sparkling water seemed to rise to meet her eyes, fixed on her precarious footing, and a great spasm of fear made her shiver. But to turn was impossible, and would have meant a certain fall, so she raised her gaze to the opposite bank and stepped out as quickly as she dared.

She might perhaps have reached the other side in safety, although deathly sick and faint, but, just as she got to the middle of the stream, which was perhaps fifty feet wide, a young



colt, which had escaped from the pasture, came suddenly crashing through the corn, with a man in full pursuit. The startled girl screamed, slipped, lost her footing, and fell down, down, into the deep, still water.

And as she fell a sudden recollection of the story of that dangerous undercurrent came to her, and filled her with despairing fear. She had never learned the exact location of the creek in question, but she felt sure that this was the one, and believing herself, in effect, dead already, did not even struggle.

A pang sharp as death itself shot through her at the thought of leaving the bright, living, *human* world around her, and going out into the cold Unknown, and just for a moment she longed for the old sure ground of faith; then her fear and dread overcame her, and with a last effort she cried, as she rose gasping and breathless to the surface, "Oh, Father Bertram, Father Bertram!"—and fainted. Now Arthur, on his way to the house, had been met by the colt which had caused the disaster, and turned to assist the pursuers. As he neared the creek, he heard that agonized cry, and while the horse dashed on, and the other man after him, he rushed to



the creek and reached the edge just in time to see Dorothy sink out of sight. He, too, thought that this was the fatal creek, and his heart failed him; but with the instinct all human beings own to call upon a power higher than themselves, when in need of help, he muttered, "Oh, my God, my God!" as he plunged down the almost perpendicular bank and leaped into the stream.

If he had but known it, this particular creek, although very deep, had no current whatever, but no such comforting knowledge came to him, as he braced himself firmly against the floor of the stream and looked around him, and when he saw her lying unconscious, with her frock caught in the knotted root of a tree which grew on the bank, and realized that she was not, as he had feared, beyond his aid, the revulsion of feeling weakened him so much that for a moment he could not move a muscle. "Thank God," he said unthinkingly as he hastily released her; then lifting her in his arms, he struck out for the shore nearest the house. It was not easy to swim so encumbered, but he did it somehow, and arriving at the edge, he managed to clamber up the steep bank (just how he never knew),



and laid the fainting girl on the ground. Then he quickly tore open the neck of her gown, but at sight of the bare flesh, so soft and white and dainty, closed it again just as quickly as he had undone it, feeling as if he had committed sacrilege. (It is a queer but indisputable fact, that a man who can gaze unabashed upon the naked shoulders and bust of a woman in a ball-gown or bathing suit, is apt to feel ashamed when he sees the merest speck of uncovered skin at an unconventional time, and in an unexpected manner.)

Taking her up in his arms again, he started up the hill, gazing down as he went at the dear white face, with the long, curling lashes lying so still against the pale cheeks, and inwardly cursing (for even those who will acknowledge no power for good which passes their understanding, tacitly own to a belief in an evil influence, and yield to the natural desire to anathematize whatever vexes or distresses them) the long, wet hair, which, having become loosened, would insist upon blowing in his face and blinding him; yet he kissed the lovely locks more than once, as they blew against his lips, and for all his anger against their perversity, he looked tenderly at them.



But it was hard work toiling up that long hill, and long before the top was in sight Dorothy gasped, sighed, and opened her eyes.

She had no doubt but that she was dead, and being possessed of very conventional ideas regarding the future state, she thought that the angels were carrying her soul to heaven. She vaguely wondered that the blue sky above should look so natural, and she felt rather surprised to find that a disembodied soul could suffer from the sickening headache which invariably follows a fainting-fit, and be oppressed with a deadly nausea. But she was still very weak, and in such moments new teachings are apt to fade away and leave those of childhood to reign supreme, so no thought of her lately-learned skepticism came to her. A second later her eyes, in closing again, encountered those others looking down into them, and silently, and as apparently suddenly as all nature's great works take place, the gates of the only heaven mortals ever see swung open to her, and she knew that the man of her heart loved her even as she did him.

"My darling!" he murmured, overcome with happiness, and stooping he kissed the sweet, unresisting lips, just beginning to re-



gain their pretty, natural hue, and pressed his cheek against hers with the loving gesture natural to children and animals, and which, lost in the process of education, is apt to come back at times when conventionality and expression by word of mouth is inadequate, and natural instincts hold their own again.

A great wave of color flooded her face and throat, then, receding with terrible suddenness, left her ghastly pale; her eyes closed wearily, her lips fell apart, and with a great sigh she drifted out once more upon the unexplored sea of unconsciousness.

A ghastly fear that she might be dead assailed him, taking the strength from his body, and with a smothered ejaculation of "God help me!" he sank to the ground, still holding her closely clasped to his breast.

He was in fact nearer death than she was, for he was physically exhausted, mentally unbalanced, and oppressed by a curious feeling of humiliation at his own three-fold weakness. He was filled with an unsparing, unreasonable contempt for himself, and he bitterly wondered what Dorothy would say and think (she representing all the world to him at this period of the love-madness which



flooded his soul), if she knew that in that brief eternity under the water, and again in this agony of helpless despair, he, the atheist, who prided himself on his freedom from all "superstitious weakness," had actually prayed, and in his gladness at finding her alive, had given heart-felt thanks to the Power he belied. He was tired with the strange weariness which is our tender mother's warning that the stream of life has been unduly drawn upon, and that, in consequence, it has reached ebb-tide; and feeling that since Dorothy did not arouse she must be dead, and that therefore all further effort was useless, he laid his head on her unconscious form and yielded to the drowsiness which came suddenly over him.

A moment later the farmer, coming through the field, found him there, half hidden by the tall grass, and took his burden from him.

"Oh, do you think she's going to die?" he gasped breathlessly, roused by a new fear, as he gazed at the girl's white, set face and stiff limbs. "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Leave her to the wimmen-folks, an' don't be a fool," was the quiet reply, and with this he was fain to be content.

He suffered no inconsiderable amount of



sharp mental agony during the next hour. He was distressed about Dorothy and her long fainting fit (for, worn out with the conflicting emotions of the day, topped off with the sudden shock of fear and dread and the physical suffering which a plunge into cold water invariably gives to nervous temperaments, the girl lay long in the embrace of unconsciousness, and was revived with difficulty); he was still more distressed at the remembrance of her cry to the man he despised, and whose memory he thought he had succeeded in effacing from the mind of his beloved, and when the good-natured farmer's wife told him that his rival's name had been first upon the lips of her charge when, at last, she opened her eyes consciously, he was almost in despair.

Dry clothing, however, a generous cup of hot rye coffee, and the knowledge that at all events she was still alive, did much to restore his natural cheerfulness, and when he was told that Dorothy was sufficiently recovered to see him for a little while, he hardly finished greeting her as she lay, pale and shadowy looking, on the stiff horse-hair lounge in the prim parlor of the farmhouse, before attacking her tenderly upon the subject.



"Why did you call out the name of that priest you know I dislike, darling?" he asked her, magnetizing her with his loving glance. "Why did you not think of me?"

For answer she merely blushed, but her eyes were very wet, and when he continued, "If I were in danger, dear heart, you would be my first thought, and I cannot imagine why you should have thought of that other man rather than myself," the tears overflowed and she leaned against his shoulder sobbing out, "Oh, what shall I do?" even as he had done but an hour ago.

"What is it, sweet one?" he queried, holding her closely to him, and frightened by the vehemence of her emotion. "What ails you?"

"I can't bear to think of Father Bertram," she wept, refusing to be comforted. "When I was fainting just now it seemed to me that his face looked over your shoulder at me, and it was so sad and worn looking that I felt as though my heart would break. He was so good to me, you know."

"Oh, hang the man, anyway!" was Arthur's impatient answer, "the idea of you crying about him makes me furious," and he loosened the hold of his circling arm.



She cowered down upon the cushions of the lounge and cried bitterly, but suddenly she started up, pointed over his shoulder wildly, and cried out, "There he is."

Arthur sprang to his feet, but the room was empty of all but the scanty furniture, and he was indignant with Dorothy for thus "giving way to her nerves."

"Do be sensible," he said harshly, and her sobs became so overpowering that he was fain to call in the good woman of the house, and stand shamefacedly by while she soothed the exhausted girl, calling her "poor lamb," and "poor darling," and afterwards scolded him roundly for allowing her to excite herself.

Presently she left them alone again, and he sat down by the girl and once more tried to comfort her. She yielded very readily to his endearments, and after a little he succeeded in persuading her that the face which had so startled her was only a product of her over-excited nerves. She did not really believe this, but as her physical nature recovered its balance she grew more calm, and by the time they were able to start on the return journey her common sense had once more conquered the sensitive psychical nature, and she had suc-



ceeded in putting Father Bertram completely out of her mind. At first this was a rather difficult feat, since that mournful face would keep intruding between her and her lover, but at last, aided by the full tide of her adoring affection for Arthur, she forgot everything in the world but him, and—was happy, with the calm, untroubled, frail happiness produced by a nerve-destroying drug.

And so they talked and smiled and gazed at each other in the manner so easy of understanding to those who have personally experienced the delights of love-making, so incomprehensible to the unfortunate ones who have never loved, and therefore lived, with all the force and power of their nature, until the slow, sweet summer dusk had fallen, and the long, silvery rays of the moonbeams, filtering through the tall tree-tops, warned them that the night was fast proceeding towards midnight.

Then he lifted her into the buggy again, a quiet, unresisting burden this time, and on they went, along the same road they had traveled in the morning, but so different now in the soft mantle of darkness from what it had been in the golden light of the sunshine,



so changed by their altered state of mind, so weird and eerie in places that it seemed a totally different path from the cheerful road of the dewy dawn; and once, as they passed through a deep ravine where the shadows were unusually black and heavy, an owl in a tree-top far above them at the head of the hill gave vent to his mournful, ghostly cry, and Dorothy shivered a little.

Her lover looked at her face as they emerged into the moonlight again, and seeing that she was pale and a little troubled (in truth she was thinking of the gentle scolding she expected to receive from Mrs. Stonehenge for not coming home sooner), he drew her to him and kissed her cool, soft cheek, which in the dim light looked almost transparent.

"You are not afraid of me now, are you?" he asked as they passed the scene of the morning's disaster, and she softly whispered, as she slipped her hand into his unoccupied one, "No, but I am afraid to have you go away to-morrow, and not see you for weeks and weeks. What should I do if you should forget me?" And two bright tears rolled down her face at the thought of this melancholy prospect.



"When I forget you I shall remember nothing," he answered, stooping to lay his face against hers; "but I dread the parting quite as much as you do, and I shall probably not see you again until our wedding-day. I wish," with a sudden burst of passion, "that that time was now, and I need never leave you again."

"So do I," she murmured so softly that he was hardly sure that this was what she did say, but he kissed the sweet lips until they repeated the words he delighted to hear, then kissed them again for doing so; and so, in utter forgetfulness of everything but themselves, they talked and held sweet communion until, all too soon, the house was in sight and the last sweet day had gone to that unfindable heaven to which, sooner or later, all of life's lovely things do make their way, and from whence they can never be recalled.

And as he lifted her to the ground (she did not shrink from him now) there came to both the bitter memory that this was the last time they would meet alone and together, for nearly three long months, an eternity according to love's calendar, and they were suddenly sad.

As her feet touched the ground he released



her promptly, and she half turned away as though to enter the house, which was all dark and still, save for the light one of the "aunties" had placed in Dorothy's window, but in reality because she could not keep back the tears which came thick and fast as she thought of bidding him good-bye.

But as she stood thus he drew her to him again, and taking her chin in his hands, turned her face up to his own.

"It is good-bye, dear," he said softly, "the real good-bye, I mean, for when we meet to-morrow morning there will be others there, and you will be shy and I constrained."

She did not answer, and he saw that the tears were running down her face, so folding her in his arms, he held her thus for several moments; then, gently pushing her into the house, he kissed her again slowly and lingeringly, and stood for an instant with his face pressed close against her soft, crisp, perfumy hair.

"Good-bye," he said tensely, and she sobbed back "Good-bye" with all the utter, despairing sadness of a first parting. Then, with eyes which were a little dim and a tight feeling around his heart, he watched her go



slowly up the narrow stairs until she disappeared around the sharp bend at the top. When he turned away to care for the horse he saw it as through a mist, and when, to clear his eyes, he winked vigorously, something small, and round, and bright, fell to his coat lapel and lay there shining.

The summer was over, and the autumn days, bright and glad perhaps, but still wanting the sweet warmth and gladness of the summer season, had begun.

Early next morning the sad farewells were said, Arthur started on his long-delayed business trip, and Mrs. Stonehenge, declaring that she had never spent so pleasant a summer, took Dorothy back to a world of conventionality by way of a month spent in New York.

And as the train rushed along, bearing her away from the people she loved so dearly, yet taking her on to prepare for her marriage day, the girl softly hummed a little song which her lover had taught her:

“Out of the whole wide world I chose thee,  
The whole world could not enclose thee,  
For thou art all the world—”

(Ah, the heart which inspired those grandly



simple lines must surely have beat in unison with the love-current of the whole universe.)

“For thou art all the world,  
For thou art all the world to me,  
Sweetheart, sweetheart, sweetheart.”

This dream of the life of my darling nearly became the death of my physical body, for it happened to me in the daytime when I was engaged in the service of the altar, and came in flashes of a pictured story which seared my very brain with their sudden, sharp light. When Dorothy, my own soul's double, fell into the water my heart stood still, and for the moment I was completely paralyzed, and when she called upon my name I fainted, they said. Kind hands took me to my own chamber, the battle ground of my heart and soul, the sacristy, and as I recovered consciousness I heard them talking sadly of me.

“His soul is too strong for his body,” they said, “he is so pure and good,” and my heart nearly broke with the shame of it. When I swooned again, my astral body journeyed far away and stood by Dorothy's couch, and this too, together with the sight of her grief, and the knowledge of how far apart our



souls had traveled, made me like to die. And when I again woke to the world around me I was very sad. But although I remembered the dream then and knew I had seen my love, yet on the following morning I—that is, my earthly brain—had forgotten, and knew it no more until after—after the death blow was dealt to me by Dorothy's own hand.

But up here in Devachan I remember, and sometimes I pity myself for the pain I suffered then. But in those days I went on dreaming by night (although I seldom slept, and would not yield to the wishes of my friends and go away), and the dreams stole my very life from me.

And this is a dream which came to me one night when my eyes were closed and my brain quiescent, while my soul lived and—remembered.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### A DREAM OF THE DEATH OF THE ISRAELITE.

It was early winter in the land of Israel, and the flocks were gathered in groups in the sheltered corners of the bare pastures, while the shepherds sat silent and dreary upon the ground. No longer they piped gayly or sang as they guarded the sheep; no more they made whistles or wild-sounding flutes from long grasses or stalks of grain; they were sad with the coming of the winter, and with the memory of the past summer, in the which the God of the Israelites had visited the sins of his chosen children heavily upon them and given them but a poor harvest. The thought of the famine in the land lay heavy upon them, and they prayed sadly as they thought of the evil years to come.

Now the Israelite who had betrayed the Ishmaelitish maiden was well prepared for the



rainy season, and his garner's were overflowing with the grain he had purchased from the father of the maiden; yet was he sad and his heart heavy within him. And his kindred looked sadly upon him and said: "Why is his soul so sad? He has grain in plenty and to spare; the maiden to whom he is betrothed is fair to look upon and her desire is towards him; he has made sacrifices to God for all the evil he did in sojourning with the Ishmaelites so long and staying within the borders of their land; yet did not the peace offering which the high priest offered for the sins of the people comfort him, and he is still sad at heart. Wherefore are these things so?"

And they questioned him regarding all these matters, and would have made a festival for him, saying, "Perchance it will lighten his spirit," but he would not, and answered nothing to that which they spake.

And ever he wandered alone, or sat upon the high hills looking towards the land of Ishmael, and ever his soul did tear and rend itself until his body was worn with the struggle, and his face like that of a man who has been down to war. For his heart was ever with



the maiden of Ishmael, and the offering of the high priest had not washed from his soul the knowledge of his bitter sin. (For that was in days when men were wont to believe that the killing of another could wash away sin from a man's soul.) And when he thought of her whom he loved and had betrayed, his soul wept and would not be comforted, and his eyes ran over with tears. And when, at night, he sat looking at the world around him, he saw nothing save her face raised to his and her body as it lay upon the ground as he had left her bending over the youth whom he had slain. And his heart was very tender towards the youth whom he had slain, for now he knew wherein the stripling had suffered, even as he was himself suffering, and there is sympathy between those who mourn for a like pain.

And once he said, "Would God I had left the maiden to marry the man who loved her, for now have I betrayed her to misery, perchance to death," and he feared to hear that she had been stoned.

Now he was a judge in Israel, and once it came to pass that a maiden who had lost her virginity was brought to him, and the



people demanded that she be stoned. And when the maiden looked at him she had eyes like unto her whom he had betrayed, and his heart failed him. And he said, "Let her not be stoned; let her be cast out of the camp. She is so young, and has been more sinned against than sinning. Let her not be stoned."

But the people cried with a loud voice, and said unto him, "Art thou he who judgest Israel, and sayest she shall not be stoned? Verily thou art mad."

And when he heard the voice of their crying he said, "Verily I did but dream. Surely she shall be stoned."

And the people shouted, and said, "Verily now thou art our own judge again, and knowest the laws of our God," and they applauded him with their hands and made obeisance to him.

But as the maiden whom he had condemned to be stoned was led away she turned and looked at him, and his heart was broken, for she seemed like the maiden he had loved. And he laid his head on his arm and threw his mantle over his face, and wept bitterly. And when he would not say what it was which troubled him, the people were wroth, and they said, "He is mad," and would have him for judge of Israel no more.



Now he was glad to be no longer judge (although it troubled him sore that he had condemned the maiden to death), for he wanted but to sit upon the high hills which looked towards Ishmael (therefore did he guard the sheep and lambs from the wolves which would have devoured them) and watch if perchance tidings might come from thence. For in his heart he still loved the Ishmaelitish maiden as the apple of his eye. Yet repented he not of the sin he had done, but said continually, "How could I take an Ishmaelitish maiden to my father's house?" and believed himself justified thereby. For in those days men were wont to excuse their wicked actions by false and petty reasons, even as they do to this day.

And it came to pass that one night as he sat watching towards Ishmael he saw a messenger coming swiftly across the plain in the moonlight. And the messenger wore the garb of a mourner, and the heart of the man of Israel stood still with fear and dread. And he went forth to meet the messenger, and the man of Ishmael said to him, "Art thou the Israelite who didst go down to Ishmael to buy grain while yet the summer was abroad in the land?"



And the Israelite answered and said, "I am he. What tidings dost thou bring?"

And the Ishmaelite said, "I bring thee tidings of the death of the maiden whom thou didst betray and leave to die in sorrow. Verily she is dead, and thou art to blame for her going to the Valley of Death in the days of her youth."

And the Israelite covered his head with his mantle and was silent for a little space, and when he spake again his face was like that of a man long dead. His voice, too, shook like a vine on a day when the wind is high, and this was the manner of his speech:

"What was the fashion of her death?" he asked, and his eyes were as fierce fires as he spoke. "Was she stoned?"

And the other answered, hot also with wrath, but filled with pity for the stricken Israelite, "Nay, she was not stoned, for she died while yet her shame was hid. But the heart of her mother is bowed to the dust, and her child, *thy* child, has gone to the land of darkness with her."

And the Israelite answered, "It is well. And had she word or thought of me?"

And the messenger was very pitiful as he



told him, "Yea, verily she died still loving thee, and she desired that thou shouldst know that thou still hadst her love. But verily thou hast done her a cruel wrong, and her soul shall wait thine and reproach thee when thou goest to meet thy God. For a woman is the tender thing of all that God has made, and no wrong done to a woman shall go unavenged while yet the earth stands. Wherefore be careful when thou crossest the Dark River, for it may be that she will push thee back into the stream, and thou shalt live no more. Yet would she not do this, for she loved thee too well, and would have spared thee even from the remembrance of thy sin. Yet think not to go scatheless, for her God shall avenge her, even if thine shouldst let thee go unpunished."

And the Israelite made answer, "It is well," and the other left him and went again across the plain in the moonlight swiftly.

And the Israelite lay down upon the grass of the field, and wept bitterly as he thought of the maiden who had loved him and who was dead, and of the child whom he should never see and could never claim even in heaven. But still he excused his sin after his old fashion,



by saying, "How could I take an Ishmael-  
itish maiden to my father's house?" and he  
repented him not of his sin, albeit he grieved  
exceedingly for the consequences of it, for  
such is the manner of men in all ages.

And when the stars were sinking he started  
up suddenly and cried aloud to the God he  
worshiped, and wept upon his knees and was  
very sad. And after that he sank down upon  
the grass again and was so exceeding still that  
the sheep came and rubbed softly against him,  
and he made no stir. And even when the  
ewe he loved mourned for the untimely death  
of her young lamb, he answered not the voice  
of her lamentations; and his dog also howled  
by his side and thrust his cold nose into the  
colder hand of his master.

And it came to pass that in the morning,  
in the gray light ere it was yet hardly day,  
the shepherds came to the field and found  
him thus, and they said, "He is dead."

Yet was he not dead, for he presently spake  
to them, but his words were as the babbling of  
a child. And they spake yet again: "Said  
we not but yesterday that he was mad?  
Verily his senses have left him. Perchance  
some Ishmael-  
itish maiden did bewitch him  
while he sojourned in their land."



And they pitied him greatly, and led him away to his father's house.

And all the winter months he mourned exceedingly and bitterly for the maiden who was dead, and regarded not the blandishments of his kindred or the damsel to whom he was betrothed. Neither did he change or speak differently when she was married to another. But yet told he not his kindred of the reason of his sorrow, and they knew naught of the Ismaelitish maiden or of the messenger who had come to him with tidings of her death while yet he watched in the moonlight.

And when the spring began to bless the land he went to live in the fields which looked towards Ishmael, and ever his soul pined and his body grew more frail.

And it came to pass that one morning when the sun arose he lay in the field with his mantle over his head, and the shepherds drove his dog from him and uncovered his face. And lo! it was filled with a great surprise, and behold, the man was dead!

Now this dream was the last of those which visited me before my life-dream came to a close which brought me up here in this land of shadows, and it came to me the day of



Dorothy's return to Chicago. And on the morrow I went to see her, for I said, "I will be brave and face my defeat at once. All summer I have struggled with my love for her, but it still remains. Perhaps if I see her and hurt it bravely it may die before I do." For I knew that my body would soon die, so weak and ill I was, but of my soul I dared not think. Had I not, for love of a woman, forsworn my vows as a priest of the Holy Catholic Church, in heart if not in word, and what would the Mighty Judge think of such wickedness? For although I preached a God of love and forgiveness to my people, I thought of him as a stern Judge, and dreamed not that he would look forgivingly upon my useless struggle with the love which consumed me.

But now I know better, and this was that portion of my life-dream which gave my soul release.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### A DREAM OF A DEATH BLOW, AND—PEACE.

SHE opened the door to me herself, my sweet little forbidden love, and her face paled at sight of me. I noticed, dimly, vaguely, that this was so, but I had so much to do in order to keep my own rebellious heart in subjection that I hardly wondered about it, and I was numb as with bitter cold, as I followed her into the parlor and dropped into a chair opposite the low rocker which was her favorite.

She took it now, and, snatching up a trifle of needlework from the table at her elbow, fell to stitching with nervous speed and energy. From time to time she cast apprehensive glances towards me, which I saw and wondered at, but she did not speak, and it was I who opened the conversation at last.

“Well, Dorothy,” I said with a ghastly



attempt at cheerfulness, "have you had a pleasant summer?"

She started at the sound of my voice and bit her lip nervously, but quickly recovered herself and answered, "Oh yes, indeed; I did not know before that life could be so beautiful as it has been since I saw you last."

Poor little Dorothy! innocent child, how little you know of life! How impossible you would find it to believe that the same passion which has blessed you so magnificently has so tortured me!

A little shade crossed her expressive face as she finished speaking, and she took up the work again. Ah me! even here I could draw the pattern of that flower she was embroidering.

"Well," I continued, seeing that she had no more to say, "I am very glad of your happiness, my child. I suppose from what you told me when you went away that you are to be married soon."

She changed color rapidly, and looked at me as though her soul was trying to warn me of a danger by speaking through her eyes, and I fancied she made a great effort before forming the words, "Next week." Her face



was flooded with the blushing radiance peculiar to a girl who mentions her bridal day, and my wicked heart leaped wildly. But I conquered it by a mighty effort, and my voice was as calm as death as I went on: "What day shall I prepare to perform the ceremony, my child?"

Again she seemed to undergo that struggle for words, and when they finally came I knew why she had found it hard to speak. But she delivered her cruel thrust with all the calm courage and brave spirit which a hero shows in times of need, and only her trembling fingers showed how much emotion she was controlling.

"You will not have to prepare at all, Fa—Mr. Bertram," she said with a noble attempt at lightness, thinking thereby to soften the blow, no doubt, dear child; "you need not trouble about it at all."

She smiled up at me from her low seat, a sweet, tremulous smile which played brightly about her sensitive mouth and was lost among the shadows cast by her long, curling eyelashes, as though seeking to reassure me, but I had heard the altered title and I was oppressed with a vague, dire foreboding of evil.



"Why, Dorothy?" I asked very low, and a trifle quickly. "Why shall I not marry you? Who will read the service over you?"

She struggled for speech again, then it came like a torrent.

"No one," she said, hastily, dropping that hateful flower at last, "No one. Mr.—my husband—that will be—is an atheist, and we are going to be married by a justice of the peace."

"Dorothy!" I exclaimed in horror, "Dorothy, my child, do you mean it?"

A ridiculous question, surely, since I knew she would not joke upon such a subject, but "drowning men," etc., etc.

"Yes," she whispered, looking at me with her dear eyes suddenly dim, "I surely mean it. No priest or pastor will assist at our union. Love is sacred and needs no such assistance."

I recognized her lover's very tone and manner as she said this. Oh, bitterness of death! she was indeed his own in very truth. But she was apparently unconscious of any imitation, and I burst out with:

"But, Dorothy, you surely don't think it right that you, a Christian and Churchwoman, should do such a thing as this you speak of—"



She caught at my words before I had finished speaking, and then,—the blow fell, the blow which dealt out death to me.

“But I’m not a Christian any longer,” she said in a hoarse whisper, and—my heart broke.

“Oh, Dorothy, Dorothy!” I moaned, almost stunned with the force of the blow which had been so sudden, and yet which I had somehow dimly sensed as coming to me, although only now did I understand the vague presentiment of evil which had oppressed me for many days. “Oh, Dorothy, my child, why are you so blind? Do you not see the danger you are in? Free yourself from this wile of the evil one, and come back to the arms of your mother, the Church, and your Heavenly Father?”

She looked at me wistfully for a moment and into her eyes there came a sudden gleam of determination, but it died quickly, and the set look came back to her sweet lips again.

“It is no use,” she told me, avoiding, as I instinctively knew, the appellation of “Mr.,” since she could not or would not call me by her old affectionate title. “It is no use. I am far firmer in my atheism than ever I was in my Christianity, and you are only wasting your



labor in trying to alter my new views. Let us," with a ghastly attempt at playfulness, "Let us enjoy this, our last visit together."

"I shall never enjoy anything again, Dorothy," I told her passionately. "How can I ever be happy again, even in the glories of nature, when a soul I have cared for with far more than a pastoral love is condemned to everlasting death, straying away from the Father's care?"

She did not answer, but her dear face quivered all over, as a stream quivers under a light passing wind, and again that look of longing came into her eyes for a brief moment. Seeing this, I spoke more tenderly, and tried to move her by all the arts of persuasion which lay at my command.

"Dear child," I said, "you are not hard and cold enough for the atheism you have taken up. Let it go, and come back to your first allegiance. Think of what it will be to recognize no power above that of your own will. You do not realize the loneliness of your position now, with your lover near, but think of how you will suffer when sorrow comes and you have no refuge to flee to. Oh, Dorothy, my lost child, come back to the only



Friend who will never desert or tire of you, and perchance you can bring your lover with you. There will be a time, my child, when he will grow weary, but the dear Lord never grows weary. And when that time comes, Dorothy, to whom will you turn for sympathy? Come back before it is too late!"

I had spoken with convincing force, and when I hinted that her lover might grow weary in his love she became very pale, but she was still firm, firm with the deathless courage of blind obedience to a mighty love. With all my despair I revered her, sympathized with her in her loyalty, for even so would I have worshipfully obeyed her if only,—I had been a man simply, not a priest. I would have spoken again, but she rose with an air which intimated that it was time that I should say good-bye, and I rose too, perforce; and as she stood there pale, trembling, wondrously beautiful, her small white hand lying on the back of the chair near her, I made a last appeal, and spoke forth the anger which consumed me, the anger which raged against the man who had overthrown the work I had labored so hard, so lovingly, to do.

"Dorothy," I said, my voice sinking to a



throbbing murmur, "Dorothy, give up this man who has so hypnotized you to evil. He is bad, he must be, to thus sway you against your higher nature."

Then the woman in her stirred itself, and spake after the following fashion: "I will hear nothing against my lover," she said with a proud lift of her head; "he is not bad, and he does not sway me for evil. He has freed me from the chains of superstition you forged around me, and even if he were as evil as you think, I would not exchange his love for all the hopes of heaven which the world holds. I would go to hell, were there really such a place," with a disdainful smile, "with him rather than to heaven without him."

"You are a true woman, Dorothy," I replied, struck with admiration of her womanly grandeur, "but you are sadly mistaken. Let me plead with you again before it is too late."

"We have argued enough," she responded with a new haughtiness, "and I will hear no more."

I tried, however, to induce her to listen, but to no avail; she stood looking at me with her wide, sweet eyes gleaming with anger, yet sad with that under-light of pathetic wistful-



ness, and I was fain to go. As I took up my hat, the small round clerical hat which was the badge of my servitude, the insignia of my separation from other men, she murmured something of her gratitude for my liking and the good I had tried, however mistakenly, to do her, but I hardly heard her, and I could not see her for the tears which blinded me. And she, too, was sad at parting thus, for not even a lover can make up to a true-hearted girl for the loss of a faithful friend, and her soul recognized me as such.

“Good-bye,” she said softly, with a sound of weeping in her voice as I turned to go, “Good-bye, and—” “God bless you,” she had been going to say, I knew, but she caught at the words before they were spoken, and murmured instead, “and fate be kind to you.”

I could not answer; I made a gesture of blessing and groped my way into the hall, almost running up against my friend Mrs. Stonehenge, who looked at me keenly as she greeted me.

“Dorothy, poor misguided child, has been telling you of her slipping away from the truth, I see,” she said kindly; “I do not wonder that it has been a severe blow to you.



It nearly prostrated me when first I knew of it, but I do not despair, and I know you have too great faith to do so."

In my secret heart I knew differently, but I could not answer. She opened the door for me herself, not calling a servant to witness my altered appearance, and I went out into the street.

As I went down I met her lover, and was almost maddened by the triumph in the contemptuous glance he threw at me. I could have taken his strong, round throat between my hands and strangled the life from its haughty beauty; I hated him as men never hate but once in a lifetime. He lifted his hat ironically, but I did not return his salutation, and as I paused for an instant at the foot of the steps, I heard his gay voice calling, "Where are you, my darling?"

Surely his triumph was complete, and so was my humiliation, but alas for the time to come!

My soul began to leave me in the agony of that hour, and I was but dimly conscious of the world around me that day. I wandered on carelessly, not thinking of where my steps led, until I found myself at the door of the



woman who had been my soul-mother in my boyhood, the woman who had warned me that Love was stronger than the soul of a man, and I stood gazing up at her window for some time before I rang the bell and went into her dark, cool, shady parlor. It reminded me dimly of my own confessional, and it *was* a confessional, for the woman whom I sought was one of Nature's appointed confessors, and knew the secrets of half her world.

She came down to me presently, her kind face smiling over my return, as she supposed, to her friendship, and at sight of me she stood aghast.

"My dear boy!" she exclaimed, with a startled gaze, "what has happened to you? Surely your battle with yourself has gone hard with your physical nature. And have you conquered?" putting a gentle hand upon my arm and leading me to a comfortable seat.

"No," I answered, feeling the bitterness of defeat anew with her affectionate glance reading me, "No, I have not conquered. I have been utterly defeated, and worse than that has come to pass."

I buried my face in my hands and was silent with the very force of my agony.



"What is it, my son?" she asked so kindly that I nearly broke down. "What is driving you to despair?"

In a few words I told her, and so great was her relief that she almost laughed aloud. Stung to anger, I lifted my haggard countenance and faced her. "Do you laugh at my misery?" I said, hoarse with rage and pain. "Can you, in whom I trusted, make sport of my sorrow?"

"No, indeed," she made answer quickly, "far be it from me to laugh at any sorrow, but I thought from what you had said and left unsaid, that something far worse than the reality had happened. I feared you had committed some fearful sin. Believe me, my friend, the path which your pupil has taken (she utterly ignored my love for my darling) may lead her nearer right than the one you had marked out for her. All roads lead to Rome, you know, and a better way of putting the same idea is that all roads lead to good eventually. Every path, however long, however devious, however painful, leads a soul to its higher self at the last."

"How can she find her way to her higher self, when she has wandered away from the



Lord?" I moaned, and the woman before me smiled.

"What is so narrow as orthodox religion?" she asked with a quiet, sad smile. "Do you know that sometimes my heart aches to think what the Christ must suffer from his own followers? He was, he is, so tender, so loving, so all-embracing in his love, and the churches are so rigid, so small. Did not the Christ himself say, 'Whoso cometh to me I will in nowise cast out,' and did he limit the way? It is so pitiful, this thought, this fancy, for it is hardly a thought, that God has but one way of saving souls. And even if the girl you—love—has gone wrong now; granting, which I do not for an instant admit, that she is farther from the truth than when she blindly followed a creed, is there not time enough and to spare in eternity for all mistakes to be made good?"

"It will be too late when eternity is reached," I said despairingly; "death ends the day of grace, the time of repenting. Oh, if I could but bear the consequences of her sins for her!"

"No man can do that," said my friend sadly, "no man can answer for the evil done by another, but your friend has not done evil.



Mistaken she may be, doubtless is, since materialism is a false idea, contradictory to the higher instincts of the soul, but not wrong in that she is striking out from the beaten paths. Better that she should. Old surroundings are often stifling, and under new skies all things are possible."

"But she is lost," was my bitter cry, "lost for all time."

"Nay, do not be so foolish," was the gentle answer; "do not so limit the power of God. Your friend is safe, no matter what she thinks, safe in the love of the Infinite. It is her Karma to go through this experience; why should you try to hinder her?"

I started; I had forgotten that my friend was a Theosophist, a woman who believed in many incarnations, many lives, strung on a single soul like beads upon a string. My wrath turned upon her.

"Do not talk to me of your pernicious ideas," I exclaimed, "they are wrong and foolish."

"Not so, my hasty friend," she replied, quietly, although her kind eyes flashed ominously, "not so. The idea of reincarnation fits your conception of a loving God far bet-



ter than that of a single life. Why, the very thought of one life and then eternity is absurd. It limits the idea of God to a narrow and cruel one. What earthly father would be so cruel?"

I tried to stop the flow of her words, but she was wrought up to the subject and my remonstrances had no effect. "The relation of one life to eternity," she continued, "is less than that of one day to a lifetime. Who would think of judging an entire life by one day, whether for good or evil? Supposing you had a little child whom you had cared for and loved," (her voice tender as that of every true woman's is when speaking of the thing which at heart they all hold dearer than anything else which life can give, her eyes humid, her lips curved softly. Ah, the tender, sweet mother-look!) "and you said to that little child, 'Now, you can have but to-day to settle the rest of your life; as you act to-day so must you stand or fall, so must you live in joy or sorrow while your life lasts;' would you be kind, or fatherly, or just?"

"And supposing that such a case as this were possible to a man, and supposing that at night the little child came to you and it



had done that which was wrong or foolish, perchance even wicked, would you condemn it on account of that one day? Would you not be more like to say, 'You have done foolishly, my child; you have pained me and I am sorry; but try again to-morrow?' And if to-morrow the same thing should occur, would you not again give the other chance? And this is just what God does with us. We fall in this life; in the next we rise, and we grow upwards ever. For there is no lasting evil but character. All else is merely perverted good."

She stopped, breathless with her own eloquence, and I said harshly, "Such thoughts as you hold would poison the world if spread broadcast."

"Ah, no, they would not," she smiled in answer, "but they would comfort humanity. And surely the heart of the world has ached long enough! It is time that its tears should be dried. Take the conception of death, for instance, which has filled so many lives with terror, and become such a spiritual ogre that I have known little children to cry with terror of it at night. Why, death is as painless, as natural, as easy as birth, and it is a friend



to all. You speak and think of it as a black, shadowy road leading to a place of judgment; I, as a kind friend which comes to weary hearts with a loving message. 'Here,' it says to toiling hands, 'it is time to rest, dear. Yes, you want to finish this piece of work. But it will wait for your waking, dear, and if not, other hands will take care of it. You are tired and ill in soul and body? Well, a long, long sleep awaits you, dreamless or with but pleasant visions to cheer you. You are sad? Then you shall rejoice to-morrow. For all things are new every morning, and a life-morning shall come in good time to you. Rest easily, all is well.' And when they will not come, death takes them in his tender arms and carries them to rest, even as a mother bears an unwilling child to its cradle. Teach such thoughts as this to the world and the sad soul of humanity will smile and grow glad. And all mankind shall be comforted."

"You have not comforted me," I told her, as, determined to hear no more, I rose to leave. "You have failed me in my hour of need, rather. Would to God you *had* comforted me!"

"Then I have failed in trying to do so,"



she murmured, seizing my cold, trembling hands, and holding them in her warm, kind clasp, "but you will never be comforted, my boy, until the Great Comforter comes to you. Your wound is too deep for human hands, and you reject divine aid. Make a sacrifice of your sorrow, since you cling to the sacrificial idea, and be brave. Do you think God has but one way to care for and save the souls he has made?"

But I would not listen. "Good-bye," I said, brokenly, "good-bye and God bless you."

"Good-bye," she answered, sorrowfully, yet peacefully (ah, how I envied her calm peacefulness! It was the quiet of utter self-renunciation), "good-bye, until we meet again."

"We shall never meet," I told her, "for I shall not see you again in this life, and our paths will lie far apart in the next."

She smiled, gently, mournfully, pityingly. "What matters it about this life or the next," she asked, softly, "when we have all eternity before us? We shall meet again sometime, my dear, for our souls are something akin."

I made no answer. I went into the hall silently, out as far as the door, then I turned.



She was looking at me with the tender glance which falls upon the face of a dead man. We both knew that it was a long farewell we were saying, but she was the only one who cared. My soul was fast leaving my body, and the only sensation I felt was a dim regret, a vague pain.

I waved her a last parting salutation, and wandered out into the street. All day I walked slowly, unconsciously along, and when night came I returned to the church. And all the while my soul was drawing away from my body, although I knew not then the meaning of the strange weakness of my physical body, and the reason of my mental quietude. The only time that day when I was really alive was when a trifling incident occurred which shook my nature to the very foundation.

A street musician was grinding out his squeaky melodies upon a corner where I passed by, and the strains of "Marguerite" floated to my brain, fast becoming too paralyzed to think naturally. "But, oh! I dread the weary day, when thou wilt me forget," I seemed to hear Dorothy singing. She had always loved that song, and had insisted upon singing it frequently. "I don't care how



old or worn it is," she had said once, with a pretty pout at her aunt's remonstrances, I love it." And she had often sung it to me, for I, too, loved the quaint, sweet, worn-out air. I seemed to see her now, to hear her sweet voice issuing from her dear, red, small mouth, and my whole being thrilled with a sharp, cruel pain,—almost the last I was to suffer.

I hurried on, seeking to escape from the memory of my lost, treasured sweetheart, and the music seemed to pursue me.

"But, oh! the thought you'll not be mine, will break my heart," rang out after me, and my reason was saved by a sudden burst of tears. I pulled my hated hat down to my very brows, set my lips firmly, and plodded on through the desolate rain which was pouring disconsolately down upon me. Was it weeping with me? I wondered.

"My little lost lamb!" I moaned, as the thought of Dorothy rose before me; "my poor little lost lamb!" and this was how I ever thought of her after that. She was never Dorothy to me again, but always a little, wandering lamb which had slipped from the shepherd's care and was running into danger



alone. It was a kind illusion sent to comfort me, to steal away the bitterness of my pain, and it stayed with me until the end. "My little lost lamb!"

That night I slept dreamlessly, and for the rest of that dream-life I suffered no more until the last pang. I did my work in a kind of trance, answering questions, preaching, praying, unconsciously, and daily the silver thread which bound my soul to my body grew more attenuated, until, at the last pang, when it broke its bonds and mounted from me, I hardly knew that I was free, and looked upon the priest who had been me, as another man, which he certainly was.

And the manner of my passing from the bondage of the body was as follows: I had entered the sacristy very weary in body, quite passive as to mind, and dropped into my chair with a dreamy, vague feeling that something new, something fresh lay before me. And it seemed to me that a light sleep fell upon me, a slumber from which I awoke to find myself somewhere,—where?—curiously light and airy, and gazing down upon—what? Gazing down at a man, clad in a priest's garments, who lay stretched out in



the chair which was mine, a man just waking from slumber. I was not that man, for I watched him curiously, wondering what he would do next, but I felt with him, and suffered in his pain. For awhile he lay there motionless, while I read his thoughts; then he sat up in the chair, and looked at a paper which lay on the table before him, and then—I looked upon a dead body, and the man was—no man at all, but what had once been a man. The paper lay spread out to its full size, just as the careless janitor had left it when he unwrapped the parcel of books it had contained, and the “miscellaneous page” was folded outside. “The Grey Angel,” was the first heading which met the eye of the tired man, who had been me, but was only my lower consciousness now, and indefinably attracted by it he read as follows:

“God sent an angel to the earth one day, and as he slowly sank through the clear atmosphere he looked like a simple cloud. He was not white and bright and shining as other angels are, but was wrapped with folds of heavy gray mist, and his face was covered with a veil of the same. So it came to pass that men, seeing him, thought only of his



cold, stern appearance, and cared not to lift the veil and gaze at the kind, sweet face it hid.

“And the angel wondered that men should thus shun him, for he thought, ‘Why should they flee from me, who come to give each soul all it needs or longs for?’ and for a little space he wished for some more attractive garb.

“But it is only men, of all creation, who dare or care to question the wisdom of the Great Mind of the universe, so the gray angel went calmly on, to begin the work which awaited him.

“And presently he came to where a little child lay ill with a terrible fever. And the gray angel said, ‘He is very tired’ and he lifted the infant in his loving arms, and the child grew still and quiet, and his pale lips smiled once more. And the mother, watching near, cried out that her child was gone, and there was great weeping and lamentation because the baby was all rested and well again.

“But the angel only smiled tenderly as he went on his way, and soon he saw a weary woman weeping over that saddest of all the



sad things mortals know,—a lost hope,—and parting his gloomy veil, he showed her his gentle countenance.

“‘And I thought you a dread and terrible thing,’ murmured the woman, as she stretched out her arms to him, as a tired child does to its mother, and again the angel smiled.

“Then an old man crept along, his face sad and worn and his lips trembling, and in the space of a moment he was young and strong again. And the careless relatives, who, but yesterday, had thought him a drcary care, said with one accord, ‘How very sad!’

“Next the angel visited a worldly woman, tired and heart-weary of her empty, useless life, and he whispered in her ear, ‘Come with me, and I will take you to the realization of your dreams, where your child-lover, and the cherished baby who never existed save in your lonely, hungry heart, await you. Come!’ And the great lady was very willing.

“Not far from her stately mansion, a man lay on his hard bed, sick with a bitter disappointment. ‘All these years,’ he moaned, ‘I have worked on that one invention, and now they say it is not practicable. And I know I could make it so if I only had the



money,' and like a child the strong man wept himself to sleep. And as he slept, the angel told him sweet tales of the state to which he would presently take him, where each man's work is valued at its true worth, and success comes sure and soon, and the man leaped, with a joyous bound, right into the angel's arms. 'What a life-failure!' said all his friends, 'he was such a pitiable dreamer!' not knowing that he had gone to where a man's sweet dreams have all a glorious fulfillment.

"Soon the angel, passing on, saw a lovely girl stand at her wedding-altar, and as he looked through the coming years, and saw her idolized lover become enamored of another woman and her treasured baby grow to a sinful manhood, he pitied the tender heart which must suffer so much, and he folded his cloak around her. At first she struggled a little, but after one look into the angel's tender eyes, she lay quite still. Then the angel saw that her mother would be very lonely without her, and he gently hushed her to sleep as she sat weeping for her daughter. 'Such a terrible affliction for that poor young man!' people said, but they did not know how much sin he was saved from, nor how kind the angel had been.



“‘I wish the angel would come for me,’ moaned a tiny cripple, hearing of all these wonders, and like a gray sunbeam the angel flew to his side. ‘I am not frightened,’ smiled the child, and the angel’s face shone with tenderness as he lifted the baby to his loving embrace.

“Then he hovered over a young maiden, who all her short life had longed with passionate desire for physical beauty, and he heard her wail, ‘Why am I not fair to look upon? I who would give my life for beauty,’ and ere the tears on her face were dried, she was blessed with surpassing loveliness.

“‘I am so weary!’ sighed a worn-out woman, ‘I have worked so hard and so long, and I have nothing to show for all my labor. I wonder, shall I ever feel rested again?’ ‘Yes,’ said the angel softly, ‘I will give you rest,’ and the woman smiled and was glad.

“The angel had hardly turned from her, when a little baby, new to the chill air of this lower earth, cried a pitiful wail, and the gentle angel took it home again. And soon, very soon, he took the baby’s mother to her darling, for it was her only child and she missed it sadly.



“And as the angel flew back to earth again, he heard his name called, and he straightway went to the tiny upper room from whence the voice came. A weary youth lay gasping there, longing for the health and freedom he had never known, and no sooner had he felt the angel’s gentle touch, than he was free forever.

“Another prisoner gained his freedom soon, a man who, in his early youth, had committed a trivial, sin, and had sunk, for want of a helping hand, until there was no law, legal or moral, which he had not broken or transgressed. His utter despair and sadness touched the kind heart of the angel, and he comforted the sinner by taking him to where all sins are forgotten, and where all men are, in truth as well as word, ‘free and equal.’

“Outside the prison gates lingered a woman, but lately an inmate of the huge building, and she longed for, yet feared, the angel’s coming. But when he softly told her that by going with him she might yet have the chance to do the right which she had wished for so unavailingly so many years, she sighed gently, and nestled close to his side.

“Very soon the angel heard a sound of



bitter weeping, and he flew to the scene of sorrow. A worn old man and woman together mourned a wayward son, but a touch of the angel's hand hushed them, and they sorrowed no more.

"And then a woman moaned that nothing she did was fortunate. 'And I try so hard to do right,' she sobbed. And the angel told her a tender story of a time, near as she wished, when good intentions would be the same, in effect, as deeds, and little kindly acts would each one be appreciated. 'I wish that time were now,' said the tired girl, and lo! the time had come.

"Then the angel found two fond lovers who could never be anything more to each other, and he quietly set matters right for them, and hardly had their happy faces faded from his sight, before he heard a woman weeping for her lost companion on a fifty years' life-journey. 'I will find him for you,' he said kindly, and she cried no more.

"'I am heart-broken, heart-broken,' came another cry which ended in a sob; 'I cannot reach my ideal, and this, which I thought perfect, is but little better than my work of years ago. The end I seek is still far away.'



‘No, it is here,’ said the angel, and there was a sound of great rejoicing.

“The next act of the angel was to make happy a man who always longed unfruitfully for love. ‘There is plenty of love where you are going,’ was the message he heard, ‘enough to fill even your hungry soul,’ and his heart was empty and cold no longer.

“‘Oh for a rest!’ sighed another voice, ‘a rest, and time to think and sleep.’ And the woman slept and no one waked her.

“‘Oh, if I could only stop learning for a little while!’ wailed a little child whose tiny mind and soul and body were alike exhausted with the hard task of trying to be ‘well educated.’ And another, who had always been ‘one too many,’ cried too for a place where there was room for him. The angel said nothing, but he stooped and gathered both the weary little victims of the ‘higher civilization’ into his strong, tender arms, and they, smiling, slept on his breast.

“And while they still rested there, the angel restored a woman, who cried out that ‘her day was done and no one needed her any longer,’ to her youthful powers, and in serving others she was happy.



“And a patient mechanic, who had labored at his trade for forty years, while all the while he longed for the fresh wind of the prairies, showed his sad heart to the angel, and the city held him no longer.

“And a young enthusiast, whose ideals were too high for the rest of mankind, met with the gray angel, and he was no longer a ‘crank’ but a ‘genius.’

“And as the angel bore him along, a toil-worn horse raised his sad, uncomplaining eyes to the soft, shady cloud above him, and his twenty years of faithful, thankless labor were rewarded at last.

“A wild-bird, caged in a sunny window, where the sight of the green tree-tops and the small square of blue sky which were all he could see of the beautiful world around him, raised bitter, foolish longings for liberty in his breast, uttered a strange note, half-joy, half-sorrow, when he saw or felt the angel’s presence, and his next song was trilled in freedom.

“A chained and muzzled dog saw that the bird was no longer a prisoner, and he howled so long and mournfully that people, hearing him, shivered with a half-superstitious fear.

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But the angel interpreted the sound aright, and soon neither chain nor muzzle hampered the poor beast.

“A sad-faced woman who heard the dog’s howling, thought that she would be willing to be chained if only she could but utter her feelings in some manner, for nature had frozen her powers of expression. And the angel said, ‘You shall not only talk freely, you shall sing,’ and her joy knew no bounds.

“And thus all day the angel worked, making sick people whole, bringing estranged hearts together, rendering the poor rich, setting the lonely in families, and the hungry-hearted in palaces. To the blind he gave sight, to the deaf he opened the wonders of sound, to the lame he brought strength, to the disappointed fresh hope, to the weary rest.

“And at night he flew back whence he came, and the Great Spirit said, ‘Many angels have done well, but thou best of all.’ . . .  
. . . And the name of the angel was Death.”

Slowly down one column and up the next the priest’s sad eyes traveled, the while I watched above him, and when the end was reached he gave a great sigh. Death had been



much in his—in my—thoughts lately; it seemed such a simple, easy solution of the troubles which beset him—me—and something in the common-place little article (was it a kindred feeling in the mind of the writer?) touched a sympathetic chord in his own soul, making me, the real Me above him, thrill strangely. Half-dreamily, he read the thing through again, and this time he read on to the little poem which followed it. Strangely enough the subject of this, too, was death, and again his heart responded to the spirit of the author. “The Friend of Men” the simple lines were headed, and they were inexpressibly soothing to the weary man, who loved rhythm with the passionate love of an artistic soul.

“O gentle Death, men call thee foe,  
But nay, thou art a friend;  
Thou openest wide thy soft, strong arms,  
Their woes are at an end.  
And sweeter far to weary hearts  
Than time of living breath,  
Is that in which thou takest them  
To thy grand peace, O Death!

“Wide as the sunshine on the hills,  
Soft as the summer rain,  
Thy gentle benison descends  
On all who suffer pain.



No weight of grief, no load of care,  
But thou surcease canst give,  
And rest for all the weary ones,  
Who, sad and suffering, live.

“In thy repose is room for all,  
And liberty and peace,  
With gladness for the desolate,  
For prisoned souls release.  
For hungry hearts their fill of love,  
Joy with their own again.  
What! call thee cruel, tender Death!  
Thou art the friend of men.”

So the little verses ran, and as the reader, *me* no longer now, strangely stirred, finished them, his eyes wandered down the page again and fell upon an insignificant paragraph under the head of “Marriages.” This time he started as though stricken by a sudden pain, making my bodiless entity shiver, for there, staring him in the face, with letters which seemed formed of seething fire, was a little notice which sent the blood leaping from his heart to his face, and back to his heart with terrific force and suddenness. (I had an indefinable knowledge that we would never be one again, my lower consciousness and the *me* which floated free, and I was vaguely glad.)

“Arthur Howard to Dorothy Evelyn



Perseus," he read with fascinated, despairing eyes, and he bitterly realized that now, indeed, he was undone in very truth. All hope, unconsciously held before, left him immediately; he knew how utterly a cause is lost when a woman is won, and his heart broke. Laying his head on his folded arms, his body sank until they rested on the table before him, and his knees touched the floor. In that moment of wretched despair, his prayer changed from "Oh, Lord, save this wandering lamb," to "Oh, Lord, let me die. My life has been a failure; even this one soul which I have labored, only thou knowest how hard, to save, is lost, and I am weighed and found wanting. Let me die. Let me die."

And it came to pass that his prayer was answered.

The janitor, coming to sweep the church, saw him kneeling there (it was a sight he had often seen upon entering the sacristy suddenly), and stole softly out again. "Sure and I won't disturb him, the holy saint," he said, and put off his sweeping until the following day. But next morning when he went again, very, very early, the priest was still there,



kneeling in exactly the same position of utter weariness and desolation.

The faithful Irishman (who had good reasons and numerous for loving Father Bertram) was seized with a sudden panic and called his friend by name. There was no answer, and he went in and lifted the drooping head, and lo! it was as he had feared. Father Bertram, with all his faults, his narrow ideas of the God he wished so earnestly to serve, his great love, his indecision and his goodness, had gone, —where?

Perhaps his closing eyes had seen a heavenly vision; perhaps with the supernatural powers some dying men are blessed with, he had seen the time when the prattling tongue of Dorothy's first baby would lead back to the faith of her childhood, not only its mother, but also its father, and his own memory would be loved and revered. Perhaps he had a glimpse of the truth that there are standards of conduct, methods of judging action, which are far above those in use among men, and that on this plane, where earthly success is oftentimes worse than failure, and failure better, purer, grander than success, he had not failed so utterly as he thought. Perhaps,—



I know not what the man who had been me saw, for I was not for a short space of time, and then I was—God knows where—I do not. At all events, and whatever the cause, his face was so grandly beautiful with its expression of peace, the wondrous look which so often comes to the dead mask, even when the spirit which animated it took its departure amid mental and spiritual tumult, and the lovely frozen smile was so sweet that strangers, looking at it, wept,—and knew that God lived.

After that moment when I watched the bitter, despairing end of the man who had been me, and was not for a moment, I began to suffer again. My soul was free of the body, but my personality was so bound down to earth by my love and thoughts that I could not leave the scenes of my last dream-life. I lingered around the house where my love lived, until she, looking out into the dark night, and thinking tenderly of me (for she had wept when they told her of my end), was able to see my astral body, and cried out that I was a ghost and had come to haunt her. I lingered near while they revived her, I whis-



pered sweet words of loving assurance to her, but she thought of me with dread from that time and was able to see me no more. Often have I bent over her while she slept, my frail shadow of a body not visible to those who nursed her; often have I kissed her brow, her sweet red lips which had grown so pale with fear of me who loved her so well, but she could not see, she would not hear, although at times I was almost real again, so great, so intense was my desire for her recognition, her love.

Once Mrs. Stonehenge shivered as I neared her chair, and said to Dorothy's lover, "If I had not too much sense to believe the child's story I should think that Father Bertram did really haunt us all. I feel as if he were here now."

I tried to tell her *how* I was, but she could not understand, and the hearty, rude laugh of the man I hated scattered her impression.

"What nonsense, auntie!" he said. "I thought better of you than to yield to such morbid ideas. There's precious little of the man on earth now."

He sneered, a hateful sneer which made my shadowy hands clinch with anger, and Mrs. Stonehenge spoke quickly.



"Don't talk so lightly," she said sharply, "he was a good man."

"Well, he's better dead, as far as my opinion goes," was the cruel answer, "for as long as he lived Dorothy would have had a sneaking fondness for him, and I want her all to myself. I would not have her give a single thought to another man."

And leaning over my sleeping darling, he kissed her as I had done but a moment ago, and she woke to his embraces. Ah, wondrous power of love! My caresses had not thrilled her.

Again I stood in front of her and spoke lovingly to her, but she only shivered shudderingly. "Somebody is walking over my grave," she said, and he caressed her again. I could bear it no longer; I kissed as though she, not I, were dead, and left her forever. I troubled her no more. But it was a bitter experience, an experience which all whose affections are centered on earth must pass through before they reach the peace of Devachan. And who can tell the sadness of standing, unseen, unheard, unrecognized, by the forms of those whom we have loved and who have loved us, and being unknown; of speaking,



caressing, weeping, all in vain? The death of a loved one is nothing to this, and the world is full of such shadows, waiting until their personalities can be withdrawn from the earth. And every sad, every regretful thought formed by those left behind holds them back from freedom and rest. These are the "ghosts" which "haunt" certain people and many localities.

After I said farewell to Dorothy, I went to the friend who had twice warned and advised me with such deep, true wisdom, and she knew me. "I see you, my friend," she said calmly, as I stood by her chair, striving to speak loud enough for her fleshly ears to hear, "I see you, but I know what you are; you are but the shadow, the sum of the earthly desires of the man you once were, and your soul is already gone elsewhere. Be wise and resolve to leave the earth. It is the only way in which you will find peace."

From her I went to the church and stood gazing down upon the body which I had once inhabited. It looked so calm and peaceful that I envied it, and I could have wept beholding it, to think of how I had repressed, coerced, injured it. I loved my body as the



old seer Paul said that a man should love his wife, and not one of the careworn features but was inexpressibly dear to me. I looked at the worn face, the thin, clasped hands, the repressed lips, and wept as a vision of what it should have been rose before me. I did so long to inhabit it again. I would have seized life at any cost, however great to me or others, and well for me that I presently lost this longing, for I soon found that I grew stronger as I neared others, and faded when they departed. I might have become a vampire, feeding on the life-currents of those around me, but for the remarks which sickened me as they passed above my dead body, *my* body, which seemed to cry out to me for protection against the tongues which wagged about it, and read the thoughts of those who came near.

And all day long, as the throng came to take a last look at me lying there, I suffered; for whether they praised me and talked of my goodness or called me "weak" and "fanatic," I suffered from their judgments. I was, I had been, neither so weak nor so good as they thought.

But toward dusk of the last day I spent on



earth, a child came and gazed at my dead face, and kneeling down, said for me a prayer I had taught her to say for those who were dead.

"I hope he will pray for me," she said, as she went away, "now that he is in heaven," and her pure thought set me free. It is thus that prayers for the dead are good in their effects,—if the prayers are pure.

"Would God I were in heaven, anywhere but here," I thought, suddenly sickening of my phantom life, and as quickly as the thought took definite shape, almost before this happened, my wish was fulfilled, and I—*was* in heaven—Devachan.

And once here I began to dream, and the first vision which came to me, even before I realized that it *was* a dream and not reality, was the last of those dreams concerning the old love-story and tragedy of ancient Assyria which ever came to me. Now I often dream the whole series over again, but this is still the last. Shall I ever dream more?

And this is the dream which closes the story which was the forerunner, the counterpart, the cause of the effect which produced my last dream-life.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A DREAM OF THE END, AND—A JUDGMENT.

UP through the blue sky, far beyond the small, white, fleecy clouds which gave beauty to the summer landscape, high above the paths of the winds, aye, even to the heaven where God dwells, a soul rose one day, above the ancient land of Assyria,—and it was the soul of the youth whom the Israelite slew. Sometimes it faltered, sometimes it sank a little, drawn earthward by the force of the evil that was in it, but ever it rose again, until it stood, clothed in the mists which are called of men the mysteries of Nature, but naked of the things called Thoughts, before the face of God. And there it waited, shivering in the dawn of a new life, and conscious of a great surprise that God was so kind, and its own load of evil so light, until another soul also ascended. But God spake not yet.



Now this soul, although the soul of the youth knew it not, knew not even that it was there, the souls being hid from each other by their own self-consciousness and standing each alone as souls can only stand twice in a lifetime,—at birth and at the other birth which is called death,—was the soul of the maiden whom the youth had loved, and who had scorned him for the love of the Israelite. And the soul of the maiden felt a great surprise also, a great passion of wonder that she was not stricken to the earth again for all the evil which she had done, and for the sin of being a woman (for that was in the days when men thought that all God had made was not good alike, but that a woman was less in his sight and the sight of nature than a man), and she, too, waited, chilled by the strangeness of her surroundings, but warmed by the boundless love which radiated from the presence of God. And still God spake not.

And presently still another soul came up through the clouds and mists and stood alone before the face of God. Now this soul was the soul of the Israelite who loved the maiden and slew the youth, and he was surprised beyond measure, for he had scarce reached



the presence of God before he knew that all souls are alike with the great Law which keeps all things in the universe moving, and cares for creeping things and men with equal care and love. And he was the more surprised to find that the soul of an Israelite is no better than that of a son of Ishmael in the sight of God, and that the soul of a woman is but like that of a man in his presence. For in the presence of the Infinite, all finite things are ashamed and stand abashed.

And still God said no word, and no sound came from his throne.

And all the souls were surprised to find him so much less terrible and so much more loving than they had imagined, and to discover that the burden of their sins grew light instead of heavy in his presence. And they were exceeding glad, only they rejoiced in silence, for all true praise, like all the great and mighty things of the earth, is born in silence and solitude, and none of the souls knew that the others were also in the presence of God.

Then God spake to the souls, and wonderful were the things he said to them, yea, some of them were too high for human speech or



utterance. But part of them came to me in the first dream of ancient Assyria which visited me, and part of them I know now. And the voice of God was very tender and he spake to them as a mother speaks to her erring child, and the souls wept but still were comforted.

And he said to them, "I know wherein ye each were tempted and wherein ye each suffered. And I am very merciful and loving. But yet must ye each bear the consequences of your own mistakes, for not even God can undo the effects of a single act, be it small as a mustard seed or large as the Mount of Sinai, and not even the will of God is able to stay the power of a thought. For 'whatsoever a man sows, that must he also reap.'"

Then the souls knew nothing for a space, only they knew that the name of God was not Vengeance, but JUSTICE, and they were sent away from their resting places, away from the immediate presence of God, to that place of souls which is called Devachan.

Now when this dream first came to me I hardly understood it, but afterward I knew that I, myself, had been the Israelite, and



Dorothy the maiden, while her lover had been the youth whom I slew. And when I knew this I repined no more (for in Devachan all grow calm and are at peace), for I knew that I had but worked out the suffering I had myself given to others, and that wherein I had been humiliated and defeated, I had formerly so wounded my rival, the Ishmaelitish youth. But I know also that all is not ended yet, for I must live on earth again and yet again, until my nature is purified of all its low tendencies. But I have this for my comfort, that sometime in the better days which are coming for all humanity I shall meet my love and she shall be mine. For I loved her in purity and truth, and the desires which a soul has after this fashion, albeit they must be conquered before the perfect light of the Spirit can shine forth, are indications of what shall yet come to pass, and sometime my darling shall be mine, and mine only. For we twain are twin souls, and her lover that was and is shall find another for his opposite and soul-harmony. And when that one perfect life, that pearl of all the countless lives we both shall live, shall come to be, it will bring us such perfect bliss that the memory of our



former sorrows shall be forgotten, and we shall know the sum total of human happiness. But not yet have we earned this bliss, and the law of nature, the irrevocable, unconquerable, omnipotent law which governs all the myriads of worlds which compose the universe, has decreed that only that which a soul earns can it enjoy. But a life is but a breath of eternity, and the day of a cycle but one revolution of the great wheel.

For “a thousand years are as one day in the sight of God, and one day as a thousand years.”



## CHAPTER XIX.

### A DREAM OF A DREAM THAT IS PAST.

So here, in Devachan, I rest, and know that since all things but thoughts have an end, nothing but right thoughts with their followers of right actions, kindly words, and loving intentions matter, and I have long since ceased to think any experience evil. I suffered a little when the death of Dorothy's child tore her heart in twain, but I rejoiced that she was thus drawn away from that materialism, which is the death of the soul if continued in long enough, back to—not the formalism I had taught her in that last sad life-dream, I know better than to desire that now—but to that pure faith in the ultimate good of all which is the blessing, the natural state of all innocent natures. And I have learned to rejoice in that she is happy with my rival. I have only kind thoughts for all the world. And I try by my thoughts, by my dreams



even, to add to the sum of mankind's happiness and knowledge, and to send down messages of love and hope to lessen the world's despair. For this is what every good thought does, and never a sweet or hopeful dream but assists in clearing the mental and spiritual, if not the physical sky of the world's atmosphere. He who thinks a lovely thought is better than he who does a noble deed, for the thought is the father of the deed, and, like a stream, never ceases to flow on and on.

And so I dream in good-will with all the earth and sky, yea, with all the universe, and the only thing which troubles my peace is the thought that soon now, very soon, I must return to the life which men live and see. I know it by the strange thrills which I feel now and then at the close of a dream, and I am not glad in the knowledge. For I may not meet my love until many centuries have flown, or I may meet her in some other phase of relationship and never know her, save by the soul-intuitions which men in general despise, until the moment when I shall again stand face to face with the great mystery of death and be born anew into Devachan.

But we shall meet knowingly before the



end, and still my sadness is tempered by the knowledge that all the experiences, glad and sorrowful alike, which men live through are but dreams when viewed from the standpoint of death, and perhaps death also is a dream. Perchance men are but dreams likewise, and it may be that when we shall awake from our dreaming at the last morning of eternity, we may find that eternity is a dream as well as time. The worlds may all be made of dream-stuff, and souls themselves, the only realities now, may be only the "baseless fabric of a dream." Who can tell? Who knows?

And I answer, God knows,—and God is not a dream.

THE END.







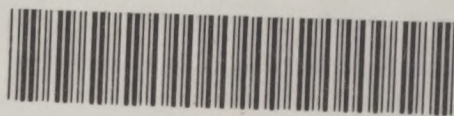








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